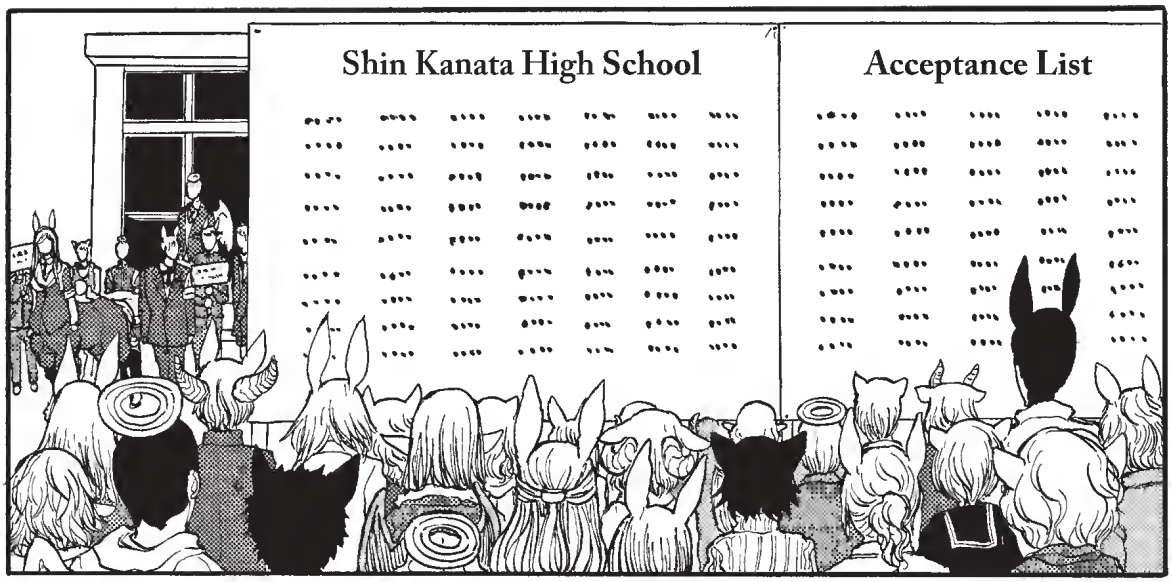
A CentaUr's Life
11
story & art
KEI MURAYAMA

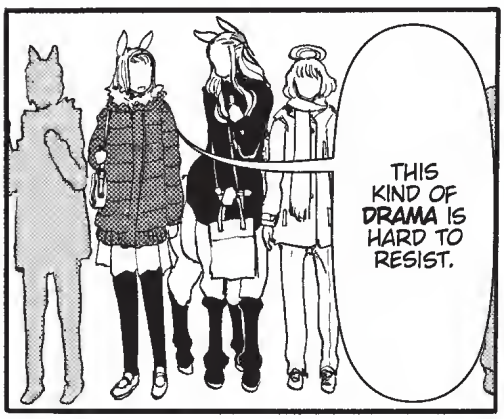
A CentaUr's Life 11

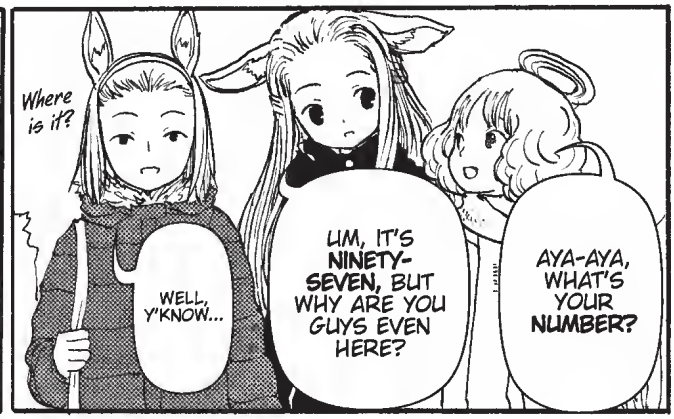
PRESENTED BY

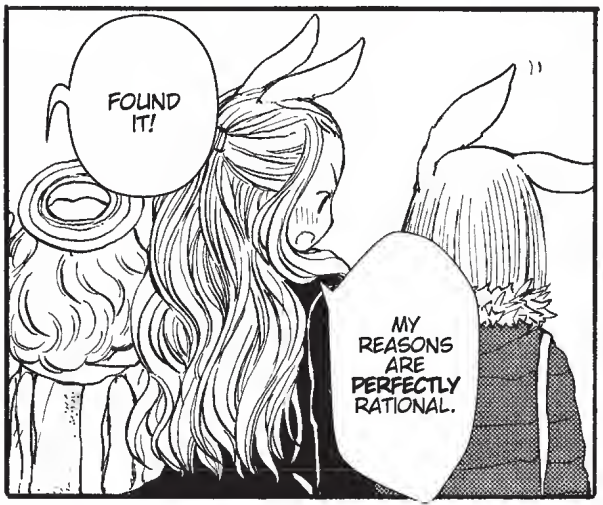
KEI MURAYAMA

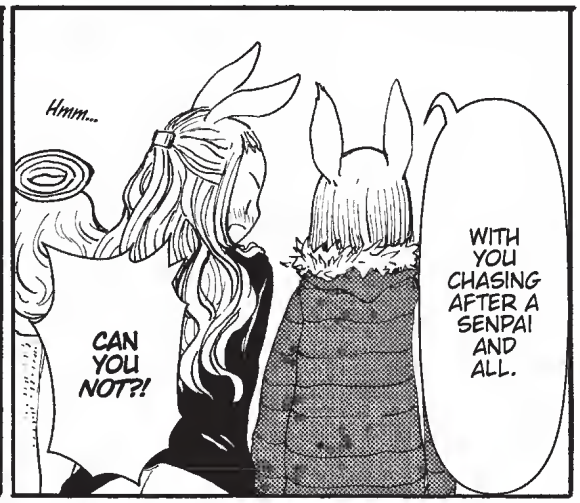

Shin Kanata High School
Acceptance List

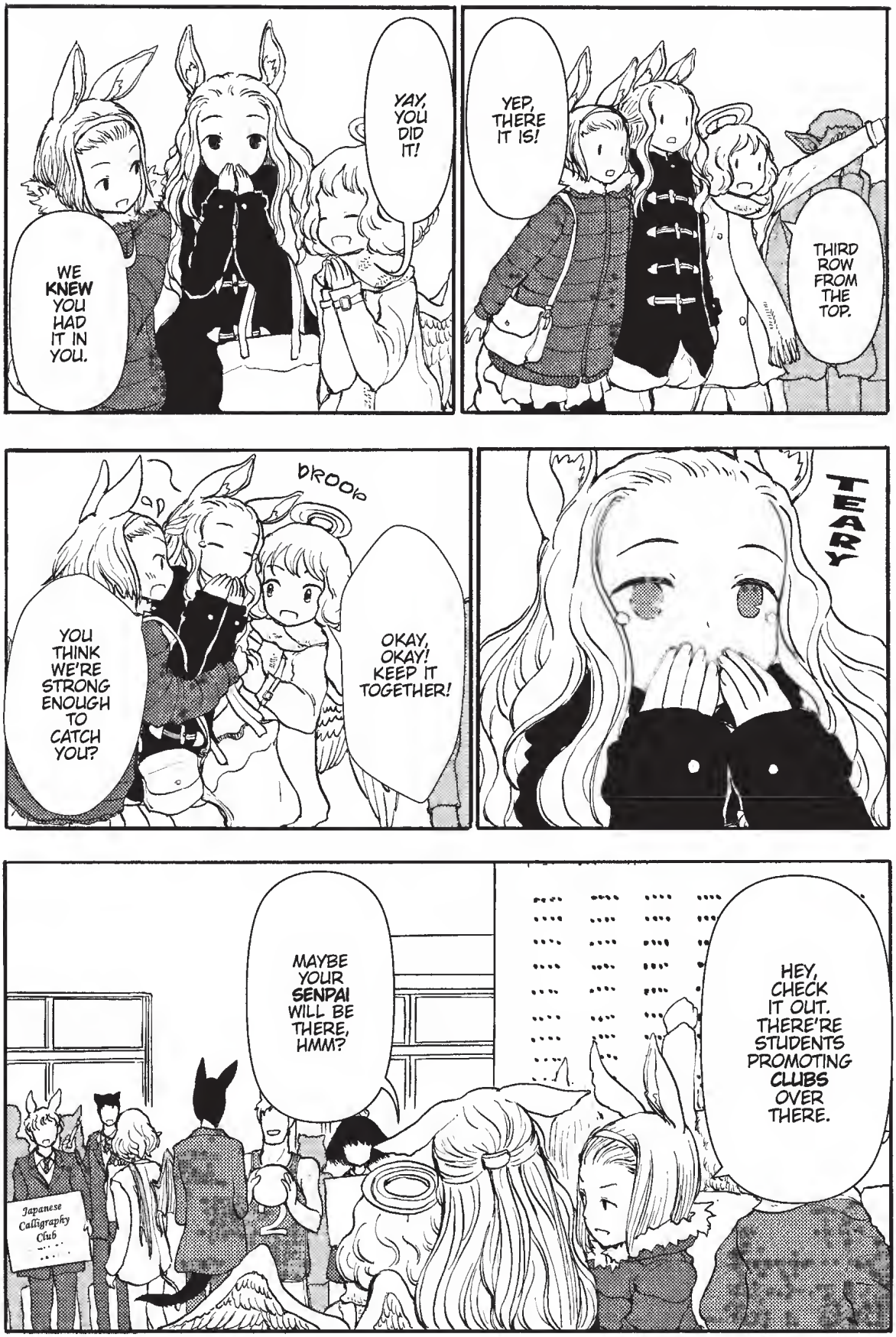
CHAPTER 69


THIS KIND OF DRAMA IS HARD TO RESIST.


Where is it?
WELL, Y'KNOW...
UM, IT'S NINETY-SEVEN, BUT WHY ARE YOU GUYS EVEN HERE?
AYA-AYA, WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

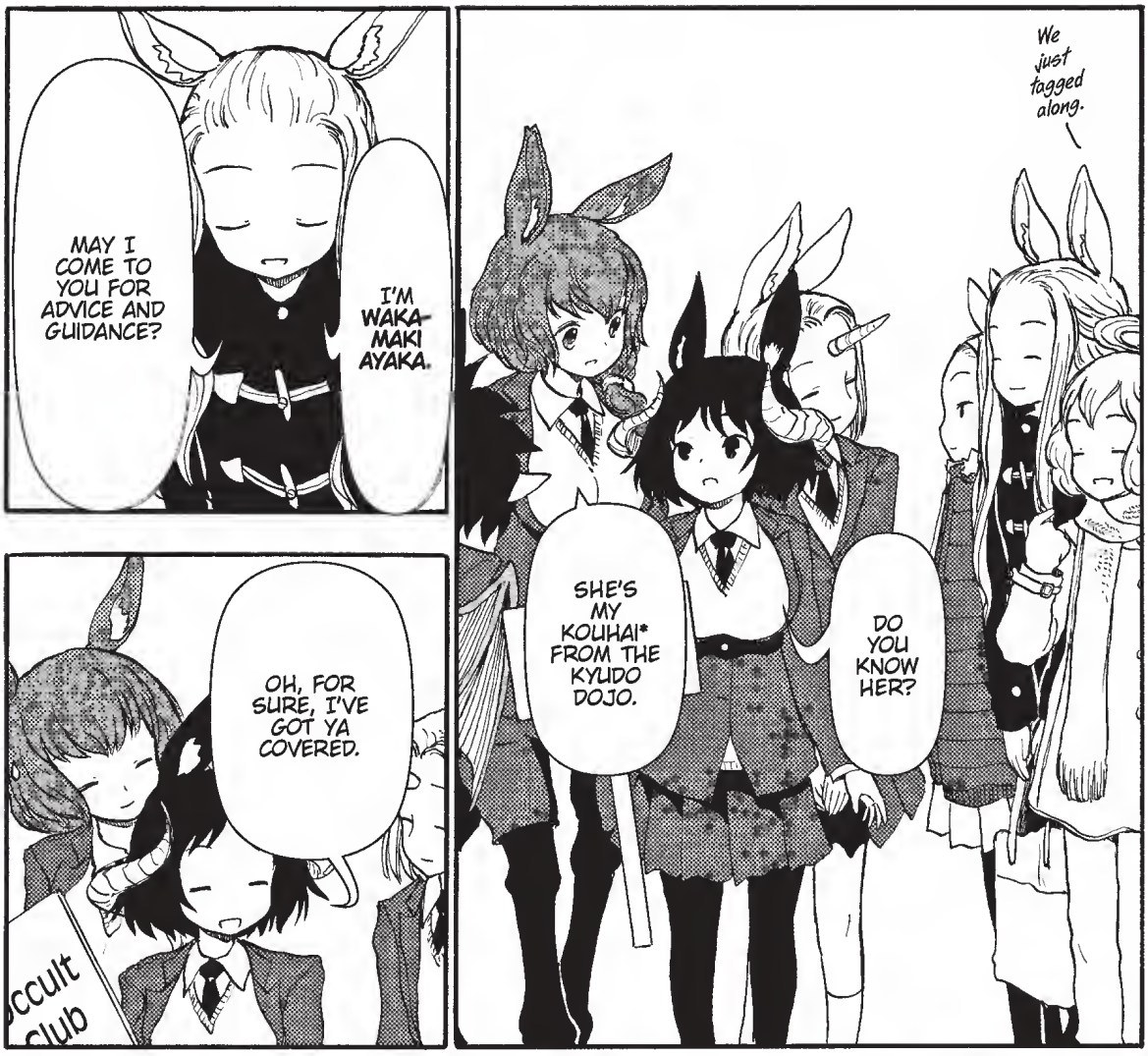

FOUND IT!
MY REASONS ARE PERFECTLY RATIONAL.


Hmm...
CAN YOU NOT?!
WITH YOU CHASING AFTER A SENPAI AND ALL.

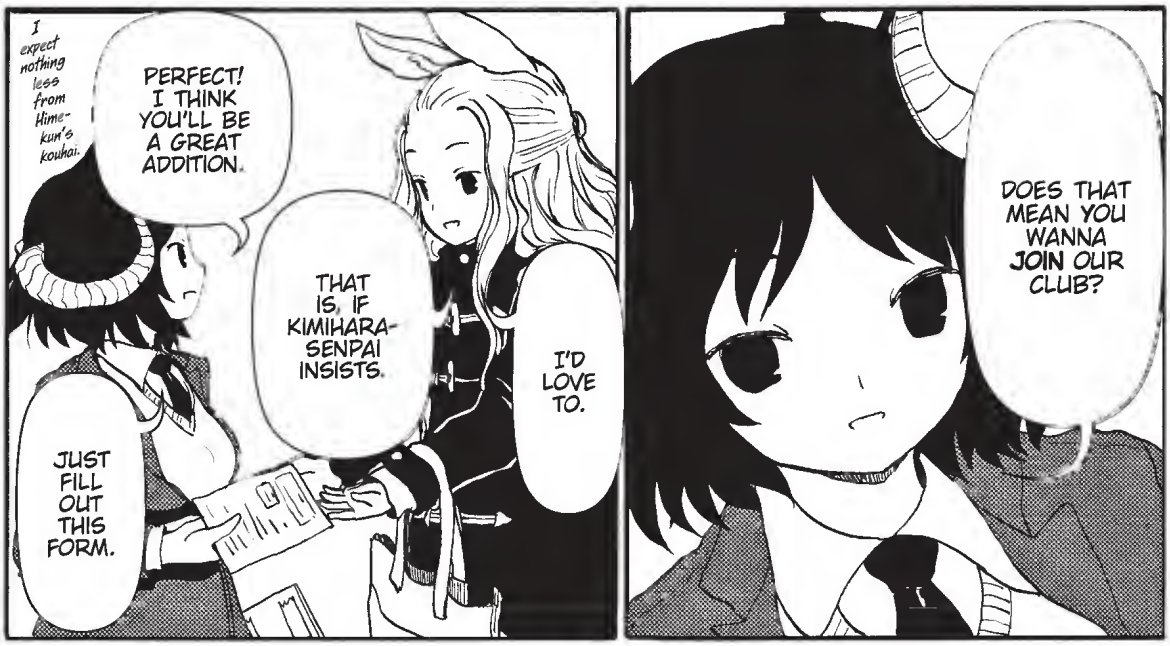

YAY, YOU DID IT!
WE KNEW YOU HAD IT IN YOU.
YEP, THERE IT IS!
THIRD ROW FROM THE TOP.
DROOP
OKAY, OKAY! KEEP IT TOGETHER!
YOU THINK WE'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO CATCH YOU?
TEARY
HEY, CHECK IT OUT. THERE'RE STUDENTS PROMOTING CLUBS OVER THERE.
MAYBE YOUR SENPAI WILL BE THERE, HMM?
Japanese Calligraphy Club

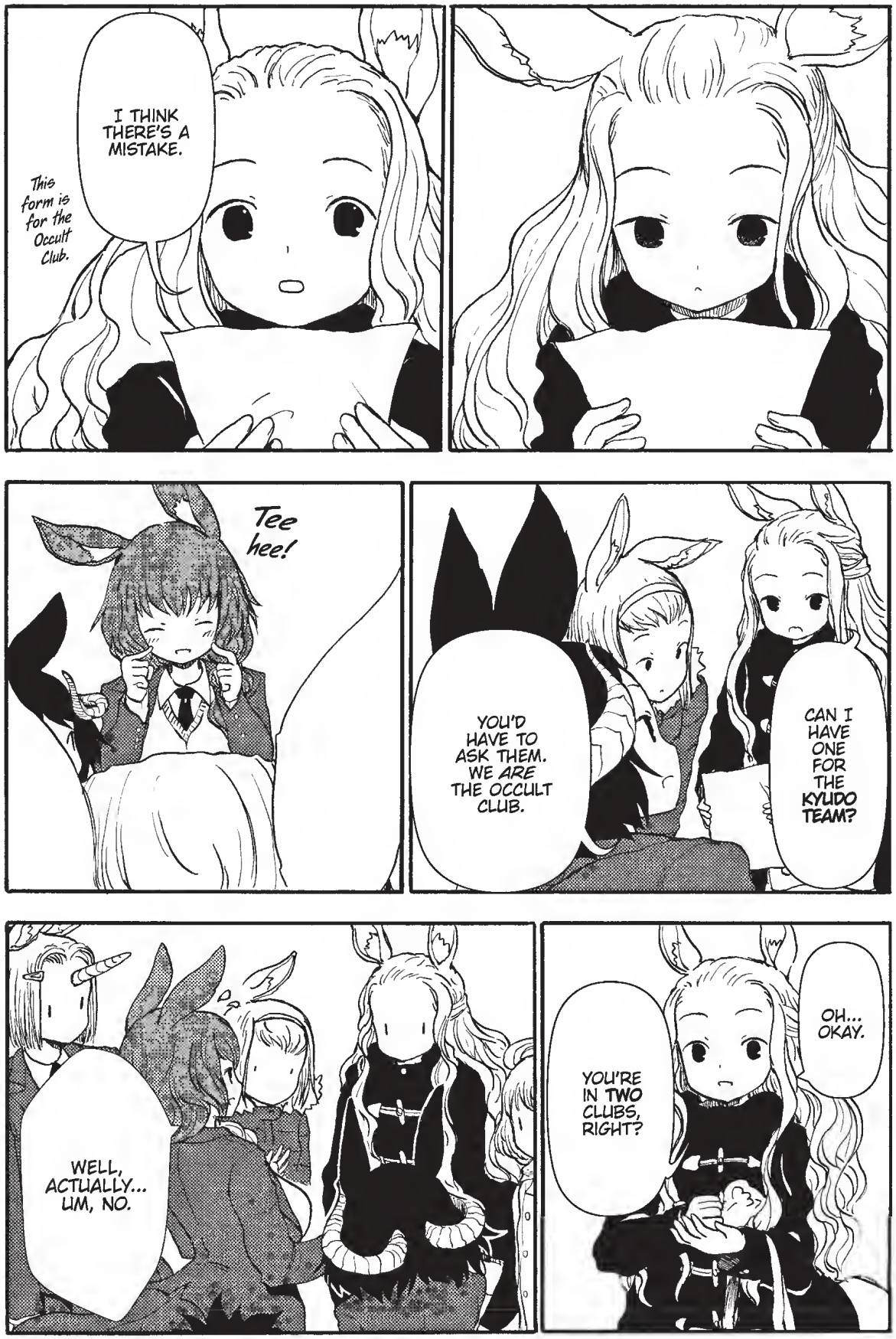
I MEAN, I GUESS I'LL SAY HI OR WHATEVER IF WE BUMP INTO HER, BUT I'M MOSTLY INTERESTED IN THE CLUBS.
PE
RK
WE'RE JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE.
OH, NO, JUST OUR FRIEND HERE.
HEY, YOU ALL GOT IN? CONGRATS!
Karate Team
Library Club
Mountaineering Club
LOOKS LIKE FUN!
Bible Study Group
I THOUGHT IT'D BE SUPER BORING HERE WITH ALL THESE SMART KIDS, BUT I GUESS I WAS WRONG.
HOW ABOUT SWIMMING? OUR POOL IS CENTAUR-FRIENDLY.
wimming Team
YOUR PHYSIQUE IS PERFECT FOR TENNIS!

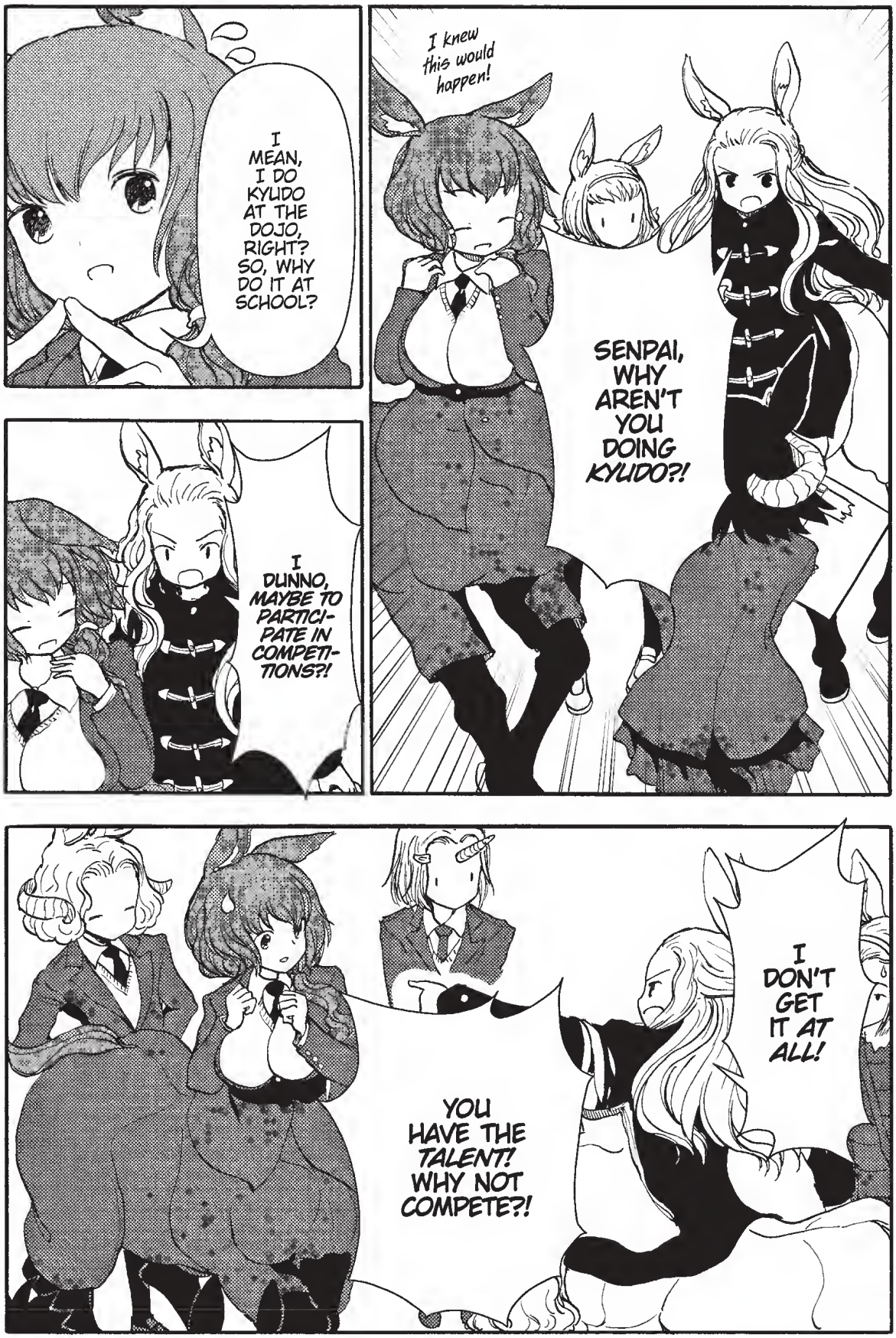
pop
Here
Occult club
AH, SENPAI!
OUR TEAM IS EXPECTED TO GO TO THE CHAMPION-SHIPS THIS YEAR!
WANNA BE OUR MANA-GER?
WAY TOO MACHO.
OH, AYAKA-CHAN!
TMP TMP
How did she know?
Occult Club
CONGRAT-ULATIONS!
I GOT ACCEPTED!
SENPAI...

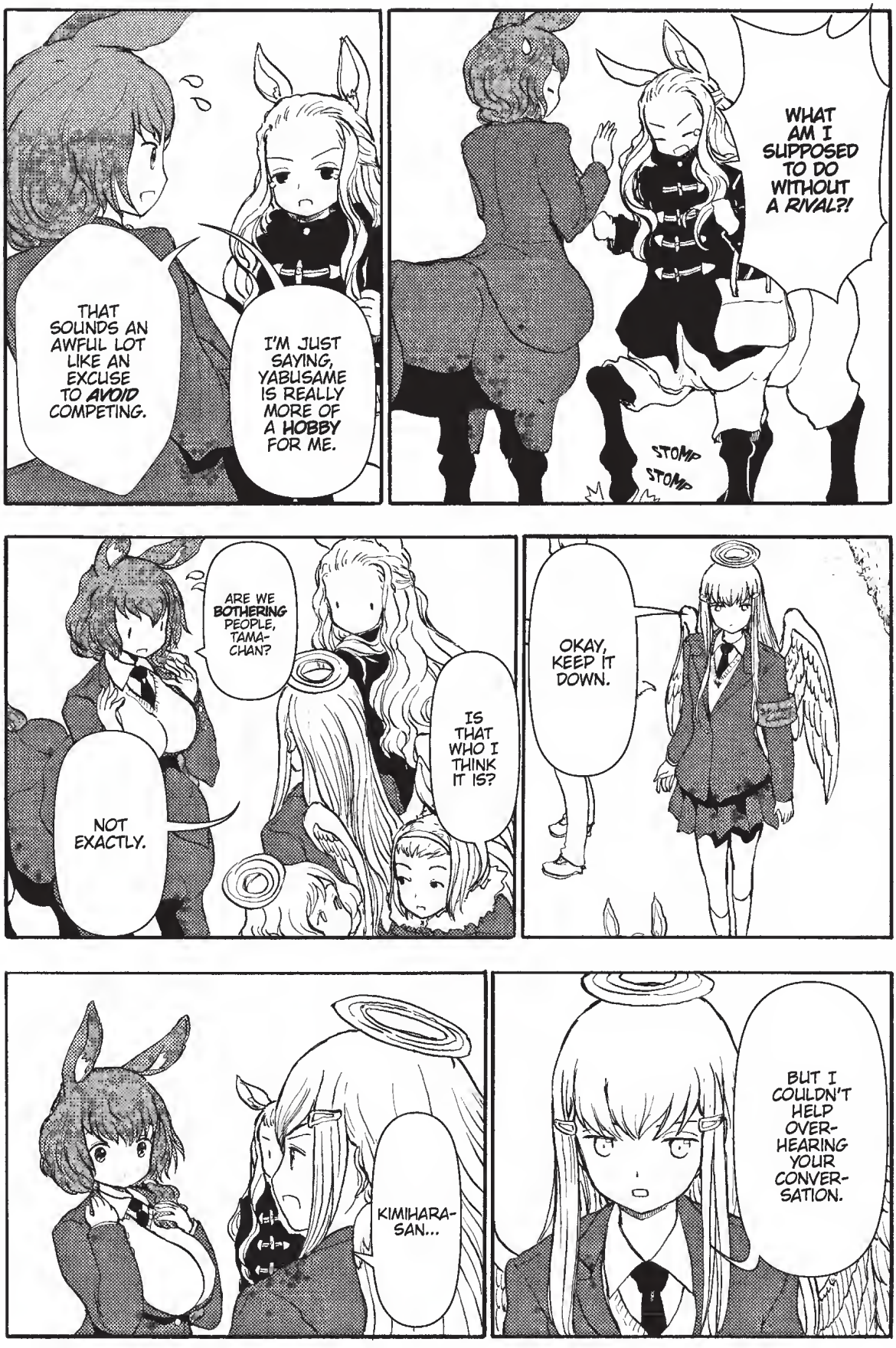

MAY I COME TO YOU FOR ADVICE AND GUIDANCE?
I'M WAKAMAKI AYAKA.
We just tagged along.
DO YOU KNOW HER?
SHE'S MY KOUHAI* FROM THE KYUDO DOJO.
OH, FOR SURE, I'VE GOT YA COVERED.
ccult Club

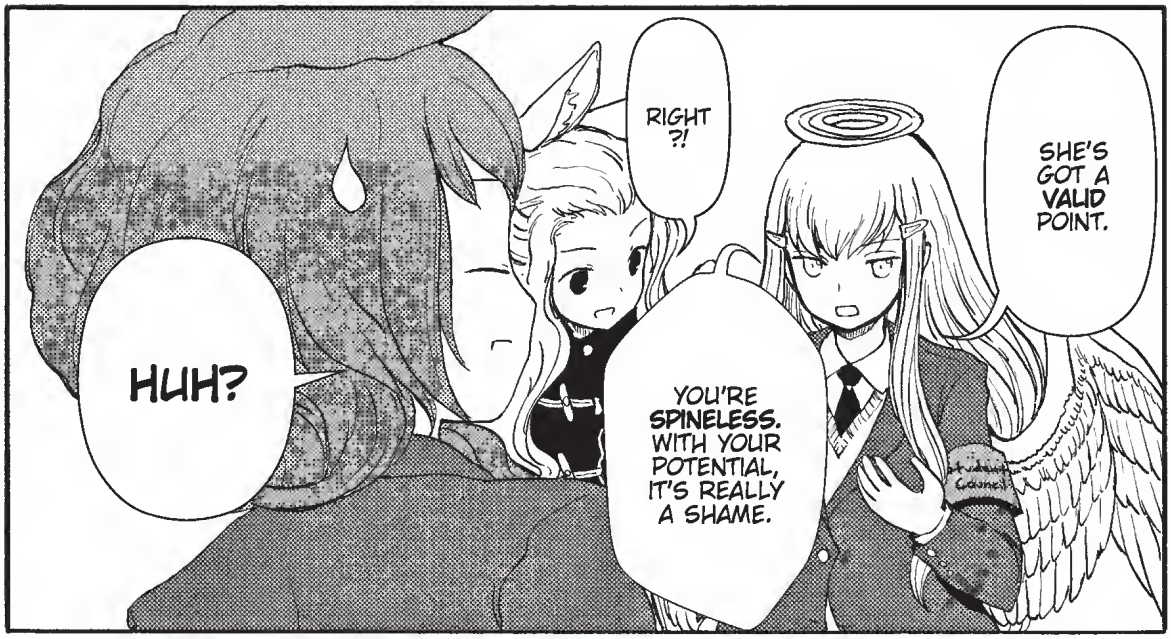
*A senpai's junior.

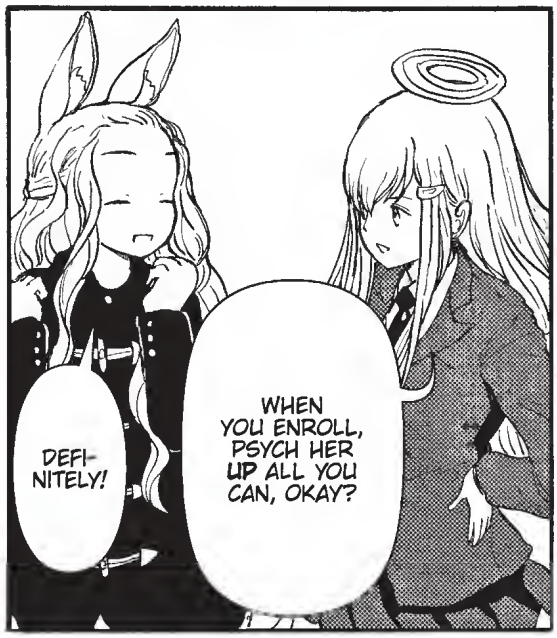

I expect nothing less from Hime-kun's kouhai.
PERFECT! I THINK YOU'LL BE A GREAT ADDITION.
THAT IS, IF KIMIHARA-SENPAI INSISTS.
I'D LOVE TO.
JUST FILL OUT THIS FORM.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU WANNA JOIN OUR CLUB?

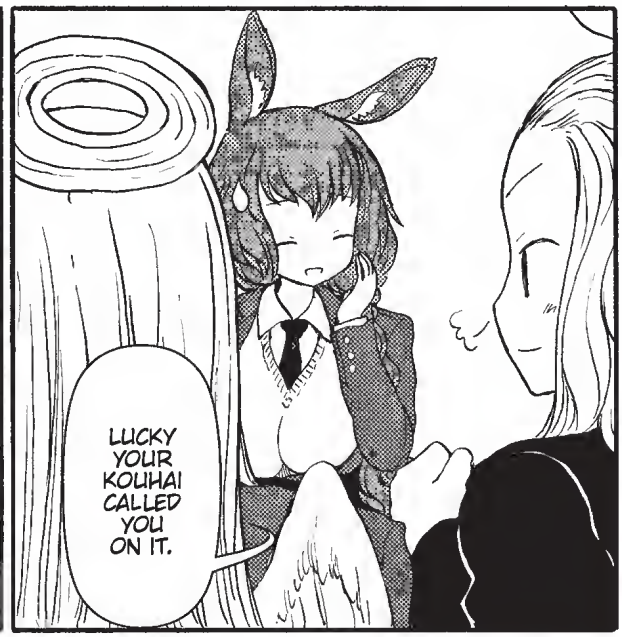

I THINK THERE'S A MISTAKE.
This form is for the Occult Club.
Tee hee!
YOU'D HAVE TO ASK THEM. WE ARE THE OCCULT CLUB.
CAN I HAVE ONE FOR THE KYUDO TEAM?
WELL, ACTUALLY... UM, NO.
YOU'RE IN TWO CLUBS, RIGHT?
OH... OKAY.

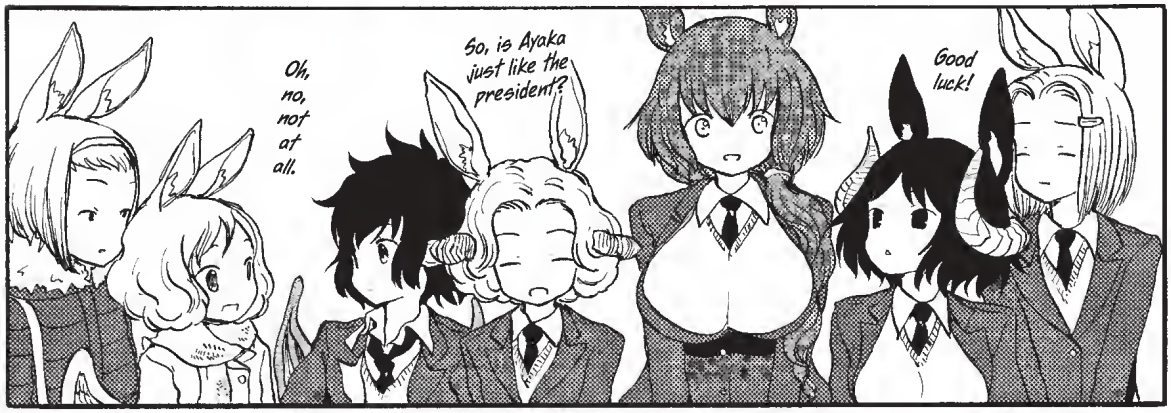

I MEAN, I DO KYUDO AT THE DOJO, RIGHT? SO, WHY DO IT AT SCHOOL?
I knew this would happen!
SENPAI, WHY AREN'T YOU DOING KYUDO?!
I DUNNO, MAYBE TO PARTICI-PATE IN COMPETI-TIONS?!
I DON'T GET IT AT ALL!
YOU HAVE THE TALENT! WHY NOT COMPETE?!


I'M JUST SAYING, YABUSAME IS REALLY MORE OF A HOBBY FOR ME.
THAT SOUNDS AN AWFUL LOT LIKE AN EXCUSE TO AVOID COMPETING.
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITHOUT A RIVAL?!
STOMP STOMP
ARE WE BOTHERING PEOPLE, TAMA-CHAN?
NOT EXACTLY.
IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
OKAY, KEEP IT DOWN.
KIMIHARA-SAN...
BUT I COULDN'T HELP OVER-HEARING YOUR CONVER-SATION.

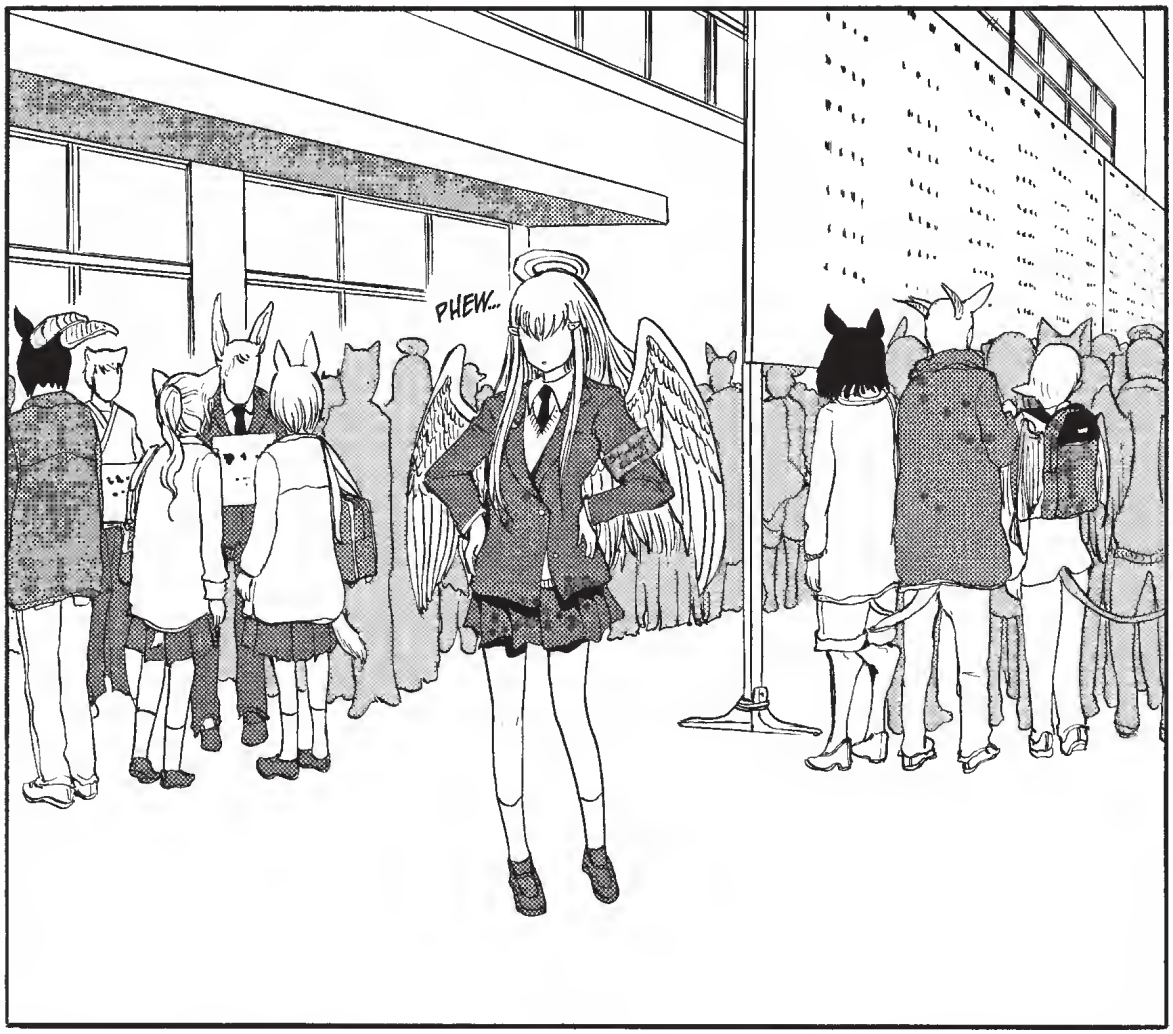

HUH?
RIGHT ?!
YOU'RE SPINELESS. WITH YOUR POTENTIAL, IT'S REALLY A SHAME.
SHE'S GOT A VALID POINT.


DEFI-NITELY!
WHEN YOU ENROLL, PSYCH HER UP ALL YOU CAN, OKAY?

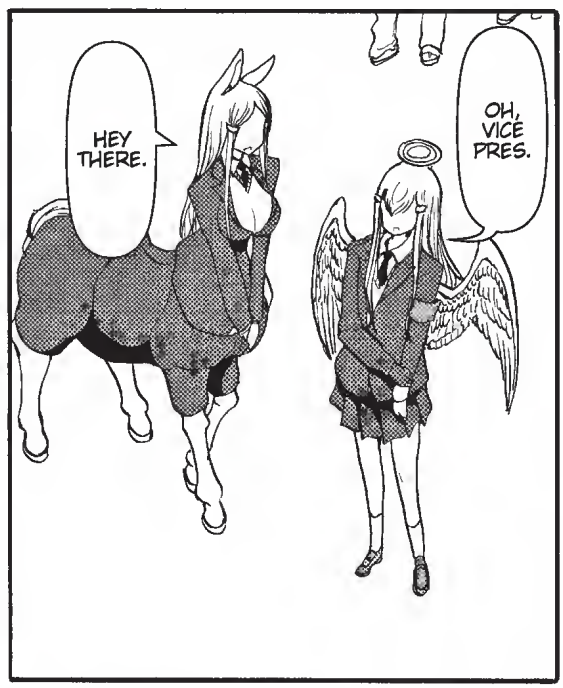

LUCKY YOUR KOUHAI CALLED YOU ON IT.

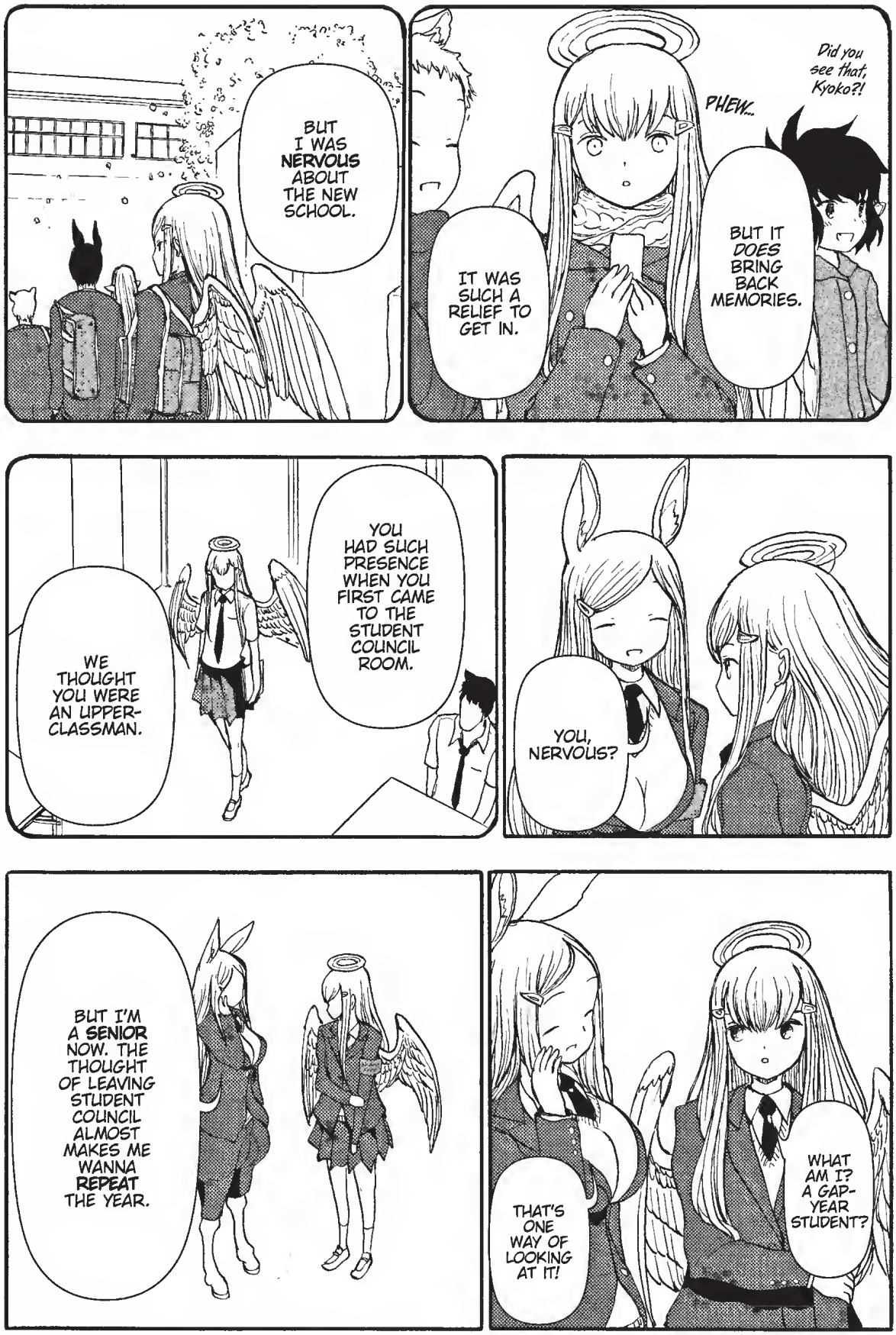

Oh, no, not at all.
So, is Ayaka just like the president?
Good luck!

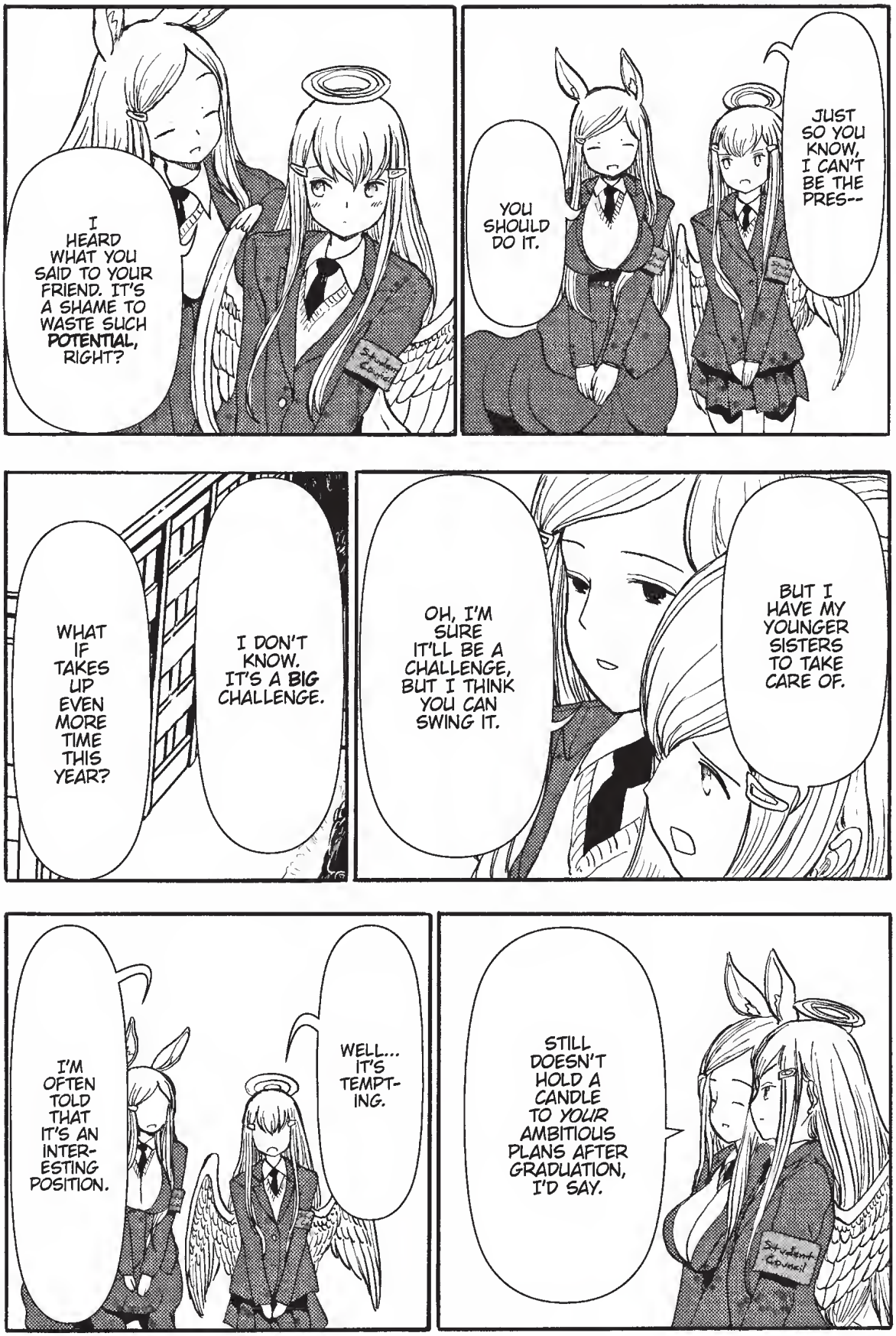
You don't say?
SHE'S A GREAT PERSON, BUT SHE DOESN'T ALWAYS COME THROUGH.
UNLIKE MITAMA-SAN, THE PERFECTIONIST, AYA-AYA ISN'T COMPLETELY RELIABLE.
THAT GIRL WAS MITAMA-SAN, RIGHT?
A.K.A. THE SHADOW PRINCIPAL OF KAMEIDO ELEMENTARY? THE QUEEN OF KANATA DAIICHI MIDDLE SCHOOL.
WELL, WE'LL TALK ABOUT KYUDO AFTER YOU ENROLL, OKAY?
I DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT OKAY.
SO, PLEASE LOOK AFTER HER.
BOW
Occult Club
OH, SORRY!
AYA-AYA, WE SHOULD GO CHECK ON OUR ADMISSIONS.

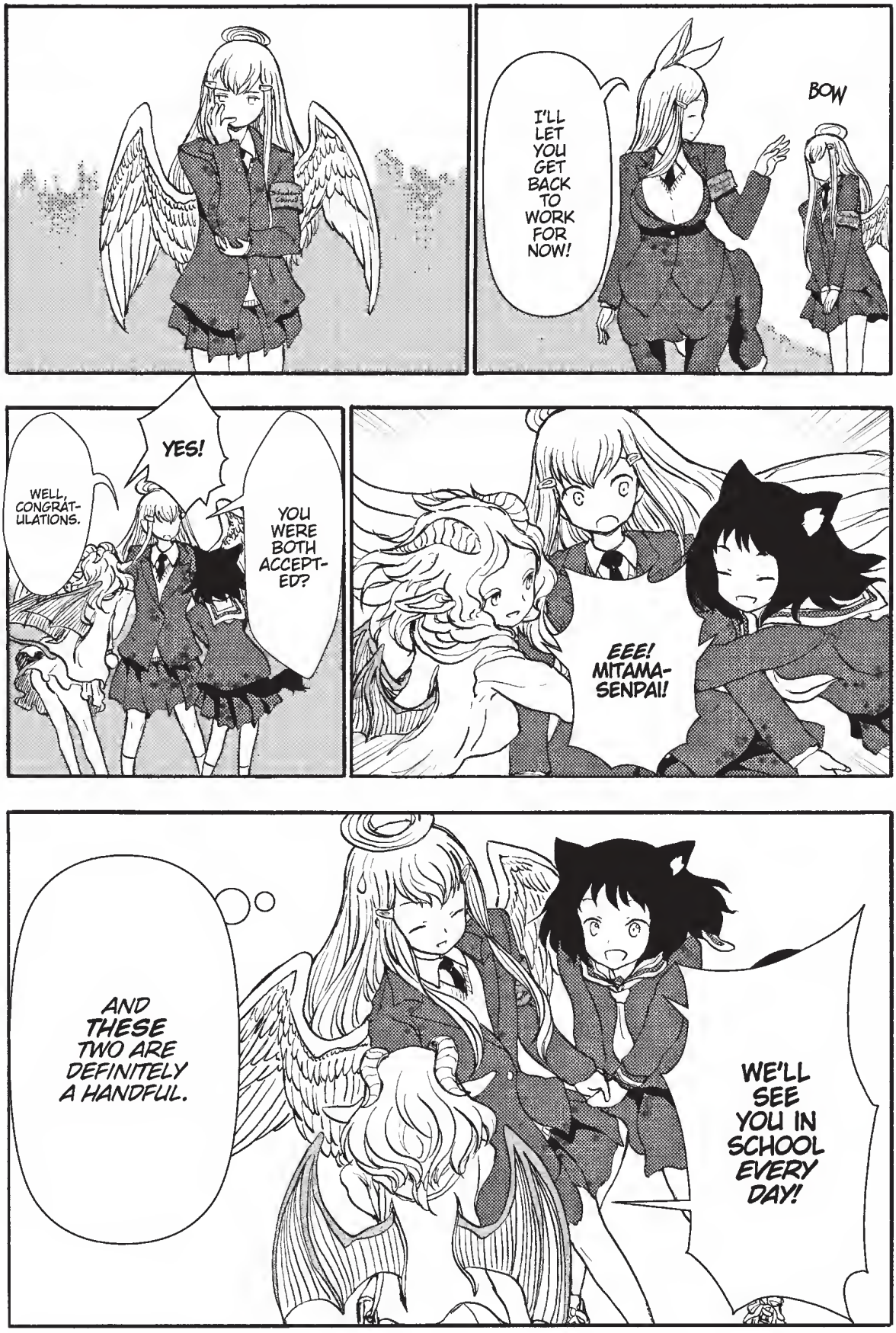

PHEW...

BUT WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP BACKGROUND, BEING AN UNDERCLASSMAN WAS PROBABLY MORE OF A **CHALLENGE.**
YOU'LL SOON BE AN **UPPER-CLASSMAN,** TOO, MITAMA-SAN.
Student Council


HEY THERE.
OH, VICE PRES.


BUT I WAS NERVOUS ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL.
PHEW...
Did you see that, Kyoko?!
IT WAS SUCH A RELIEF TO GET IN.
BUT IT DOES BRING BACK MEMORIES.
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE AN UPPER-CLASSMAN.
YOU HAD SUCH PRESENCE WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM.
YOU, NERVOUS?
BUT I'M A SENIOR NOW. THE THOUGHT OF LEAVING STUDENT COUNCIL ALMOST MAKES ME WANNA REPEAT THE YEAR.
THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT!
WHAT AM I? A GAP-YEAR STUDENT?


I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID TO YOUR FRIEND. IT'S A SHAME TO WASTE SUCH POTENTIAL, RIGHT?
JUST SO YOU KNOW, I CAN'T BE THE PRES--
YOU SHOULD DO IT.
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S A BIG CHALLENGE.
WHAT IF TAKES UP EVEN MORE TIME THIS YEAR?
OH, I'M SURE IT'LL BE A CHALLENGE, BUT I THINK YOU CAN SWING IT.
BUT I HAVE MY YOUNGER SISTERS TO TAKE CARE OF.
WELL... IT'S TEMPT-ING.
I'M OFTEN TOLD THAT IT'S AN INTER-ESTING POSITION.
STILL DOESN'T HOLD A CANDLE TO YOUR AMBITIOUS PLANS AFTER GRADUATION, I'D SAY.


I'LL LET YOU GET BACK TO WORK FOR NOW!
BOW
YES!
WELL, CONGRATULATIONS.
YOU WERE BOTH ACCEPTED?
EEE! MITAMA-SENPAI!
AND THESE TWO ARE DEFINITELY A HANDFUL.
WE'LL SEE YOU IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY!

A CentaUr's Life

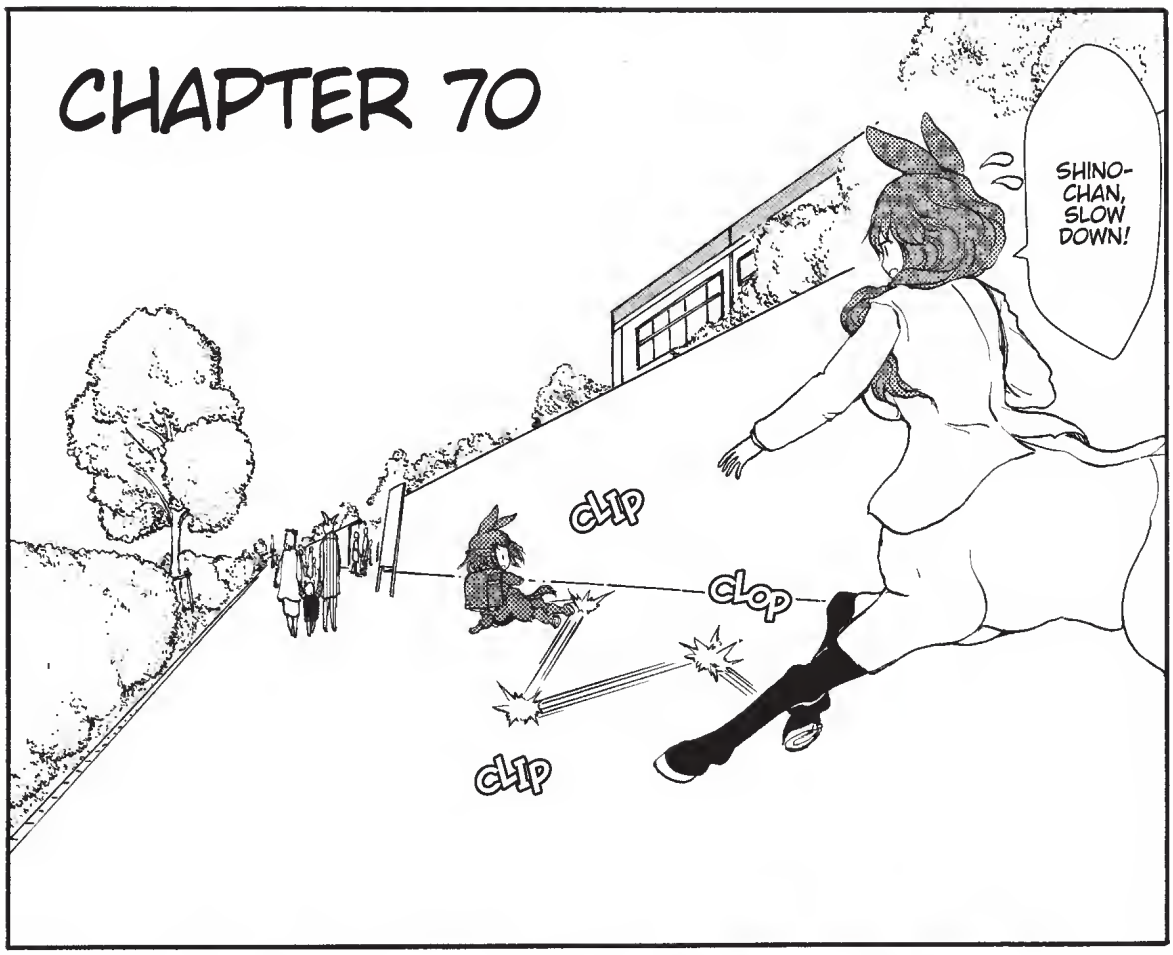
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 1

ANTARCTICANS ARE A NON-MAMMAL RACE THAT SOME BELIEVE FIRST MADE CONTACT WITH MODERN HUMAN CIVILIZATION IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY, BUT THIS PERSPECTIVE IS CLEARLY BIASED TOWARD THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE. IN FACT, ANTARCTICANS HAVE INTERACTED WITH PEOPLES IN LATIN AMERICA SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, BUT THE CORRELATION THOSE PEOPLE SAW BETWEEN ANTARCTICANS AND THEIR SERPENT DEITY QUETZALCOATL MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE TIMING OF FIRST CONTACT BETWEEN THE RACES. ALTHOUGH MUCH IS UNKNOWN ABOUT THEIR RACE, WE CAN DETERMINE THAT THEIR CIVILIZATION WAS SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED AT THAT TIME THAT THOSE ANCIENT HUMANS CONSIDERED THEM TO BE DIVINE. THEY ARE SAID TO HAVE AIDED THE AZTEC AND INCA EMPIRES (ALSO KNOWN AS TAWANTINSUYU) IN REPELLING THE ATTEMPTED INVASION BY THE SPANISH CONQUISTADORS, BUT DUE TO THEIR SECRECY, WE ARE UNABLE TO CORROBORATE THIS CLAIM.

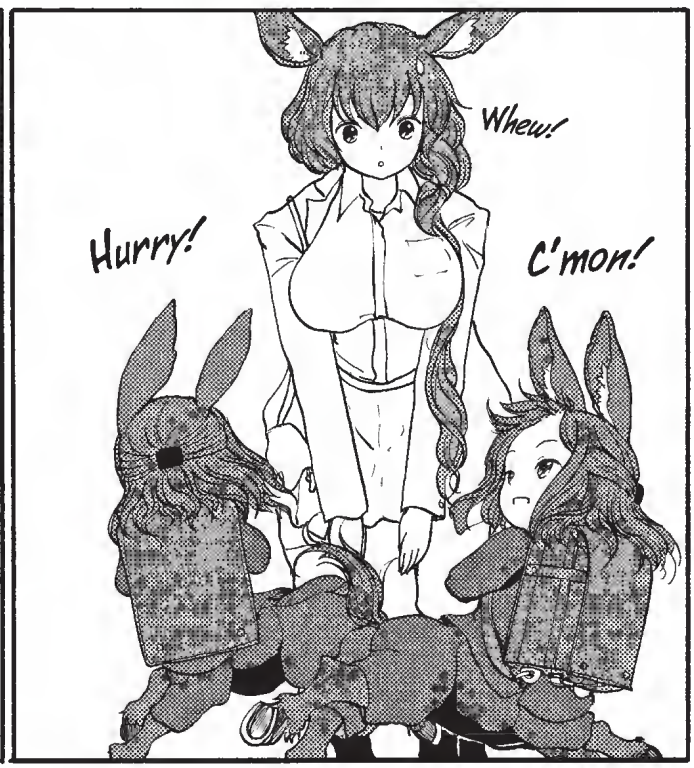
DESPITE THEIR LONG RELATIONSHIP, THE PEOPLE OF THE AZTEC AND INCA EMPIRES KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE ANTARCTICANS, WHO HAVE ALSO REFUSED TO ALLOW ANY MAMMALIAN HUMANS TO ENTER THEIR COUNTRY. THE ONLY INFORMATION WE HAVE ABOUT THIS ENIGMATIC CIVILIZATION COMES FROM THE TESTIMONY OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD CHANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH THEM, AND SOME ANECDOTES OFFERED BY ANTARCTICANS THEMSELVES. AS WE CONTINUE TO PIECE TOGETHER INFORMATION, WE HOPE TO PRESENT MORE KNOWLEDGE IN THE FUTURE. FOR NOW, THIS IS THE MOST CURRENT REPORT WE CAN OFFER.

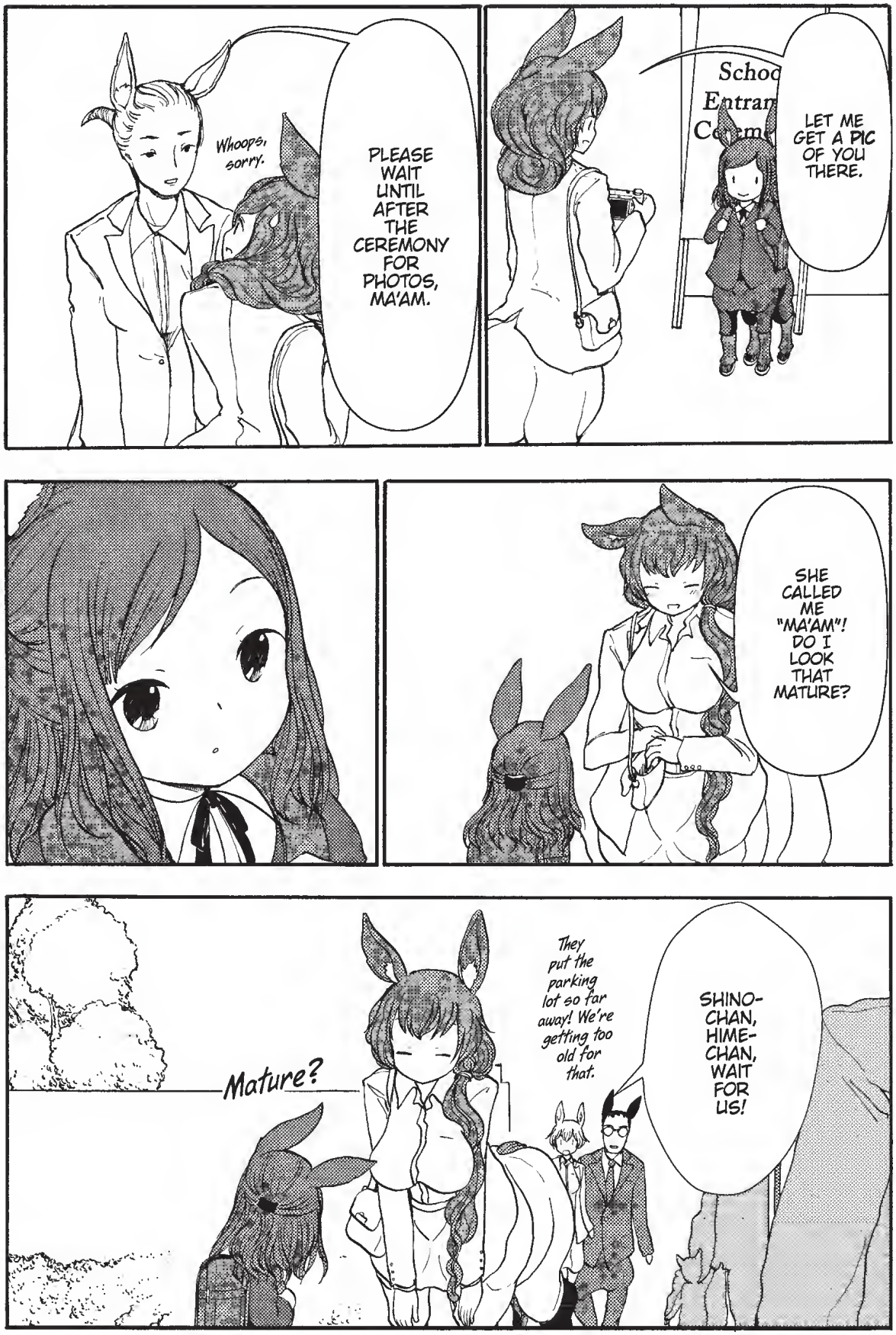
Note: To our knowledge, all members of both the Warrior and Intellectual subspecies of Antarcticans are female.

CHAPTER 70

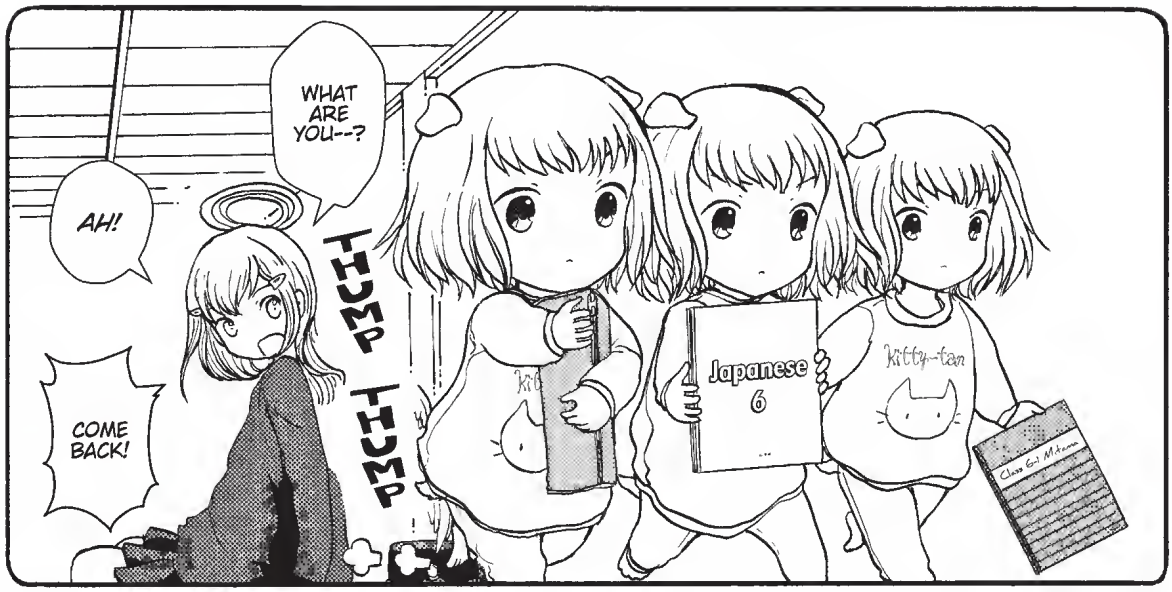

SHINO-CHAN, SLOW DOWN!
CLIP
CLOP
CLIP

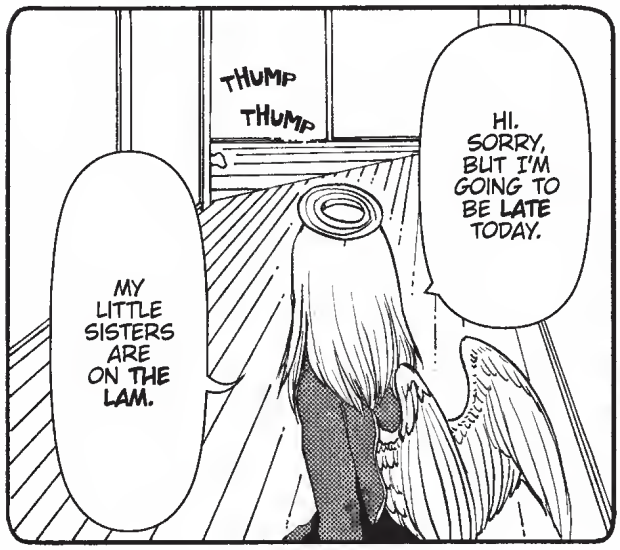
DON'T WEAR YOURSELF OUT BEFORE THE CEREMONY EVEN *STARTS*, 'KAY?

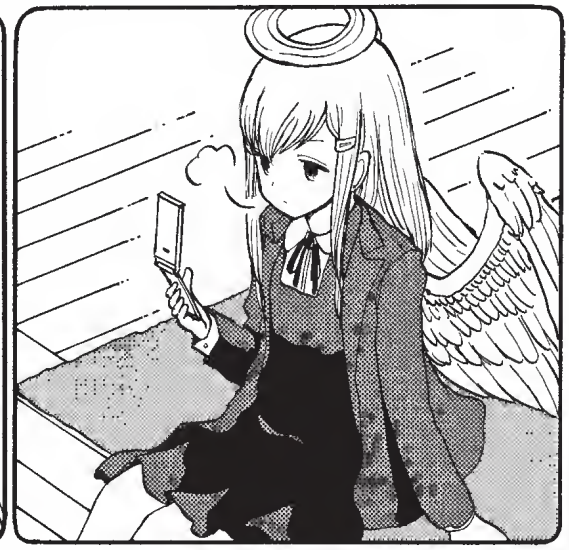

Whew!
Hurry!
C'mon!

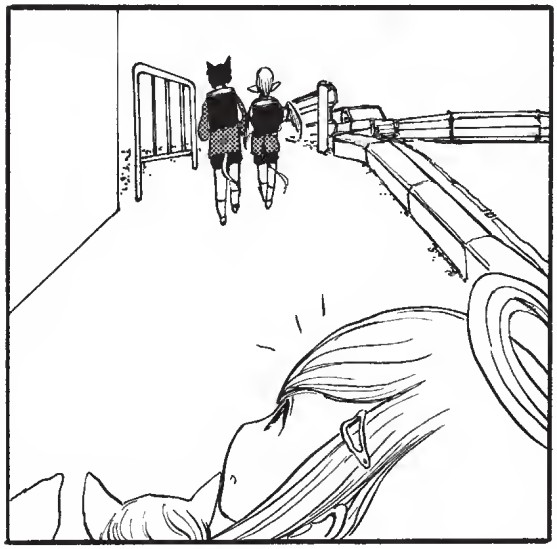

Whoops, sorry.
PLEASE WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE CEREMONY FOR PHOTOS, MA'AM.
LET ME GET A PIC OF YOU THERE.
SHE CALLED ME "MA'AM"! DO I LOOK THAT MATURE?
Mature?
They put the parking lot so far away! We're getting too old for that.
SHINO-CHAN, HIME-CHAN, WAIT FOR US!

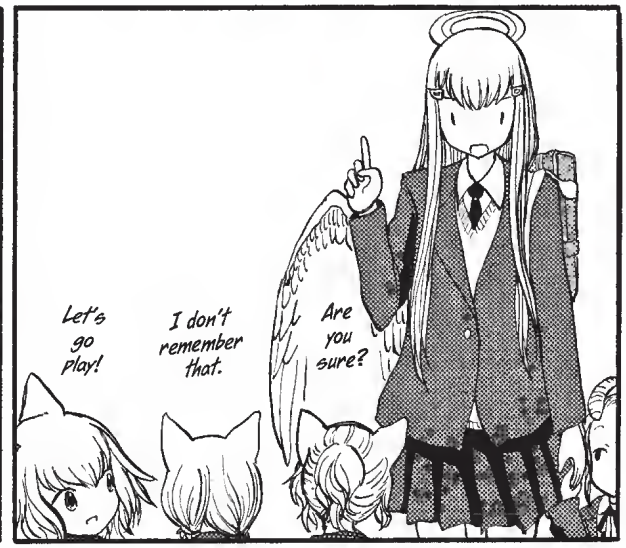
ARE YOU GONNA WALK US AGAIN?
Chi-chans can go by ourselves.
JUST HALF-WAY.
THE NEXT DAY.
Eyes front, guys.
Watch where you're going.
WHAT'S THE DEAL?
YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO SCHOOL WITH ME.
Umph.
Take us with you!
NOPE, YOU'RE GOING TO DAYCARE WITH DAD.
CHI-CHANS ARE GOING WITH YOU!


WHAT ARE YOU--?
AH!
COME BACK!
THUMP THUMP
Japanese 6
kitty-tan

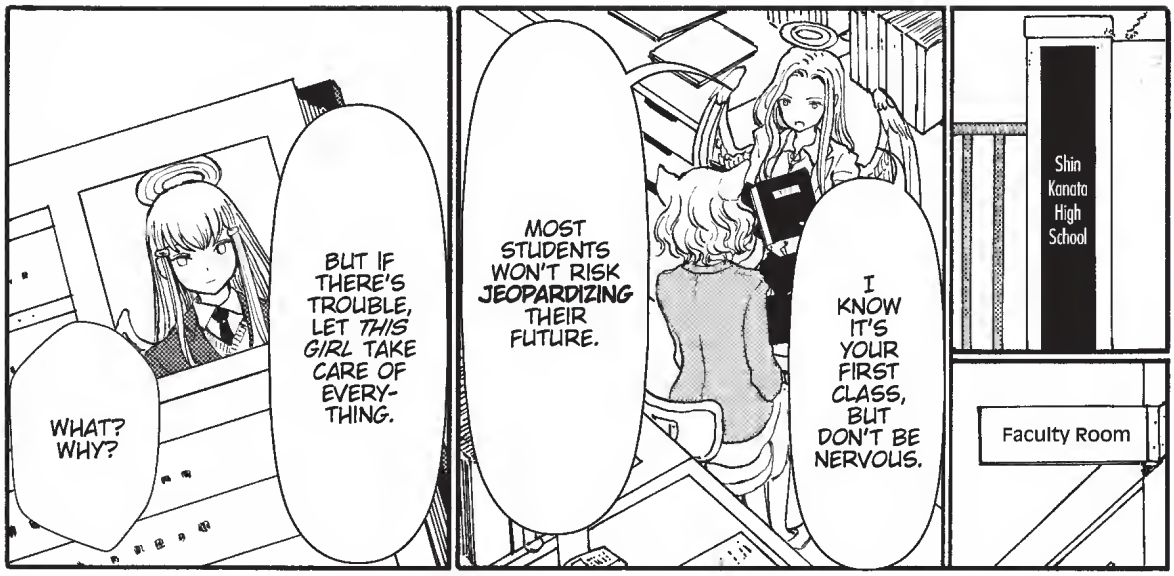

THUMP THUMP
HI. SORRY, BUT I'M GOING TO BE LATE TODAY.
MY LITTLE SISTERS ARE ON THE LAM.

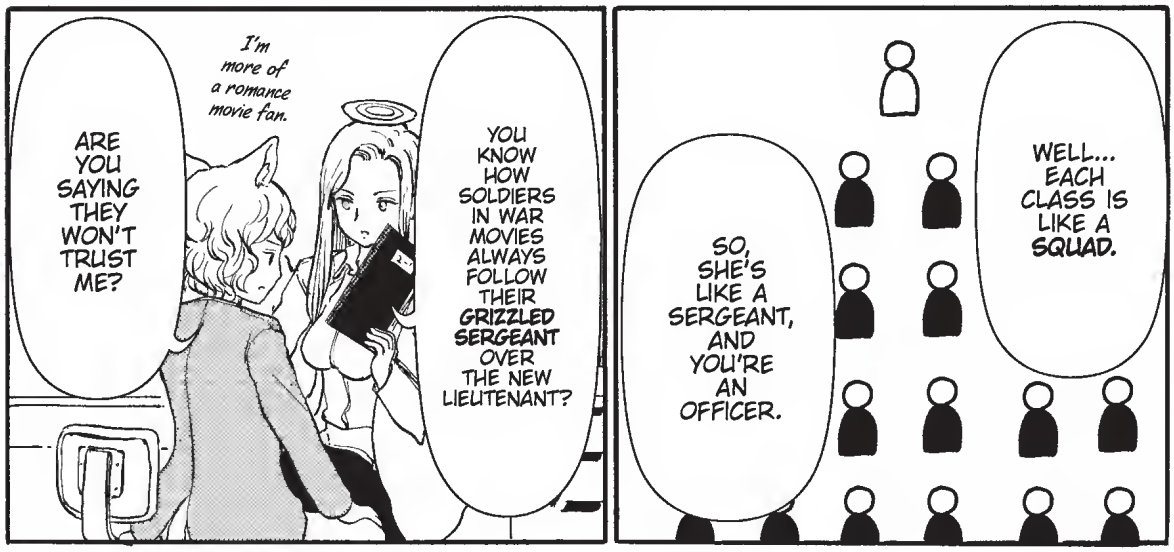


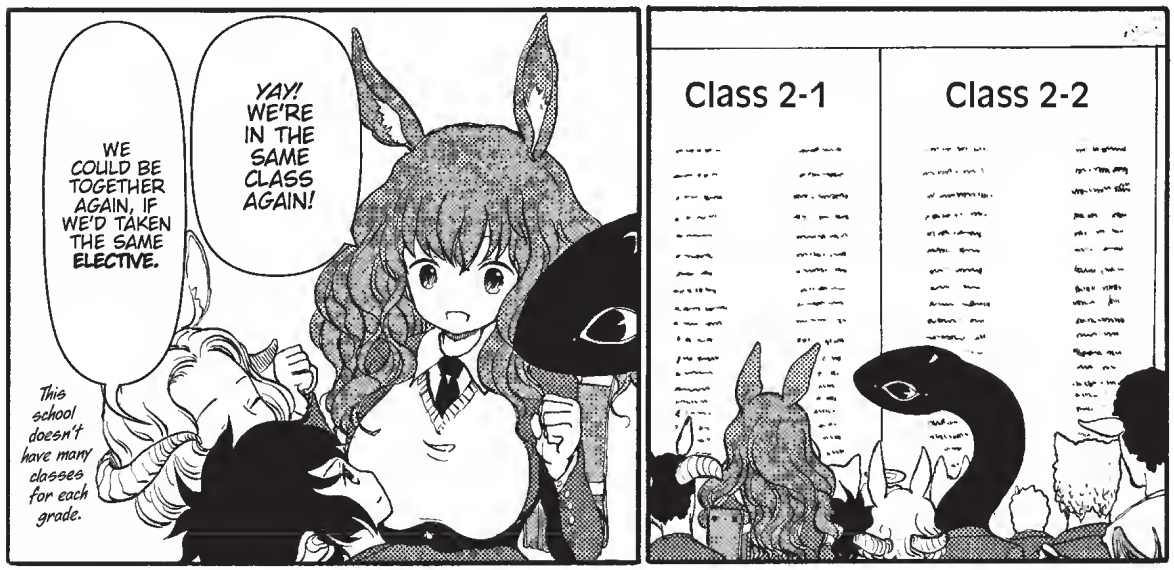



Let's go play!
I don't remember that.
Are you sure?

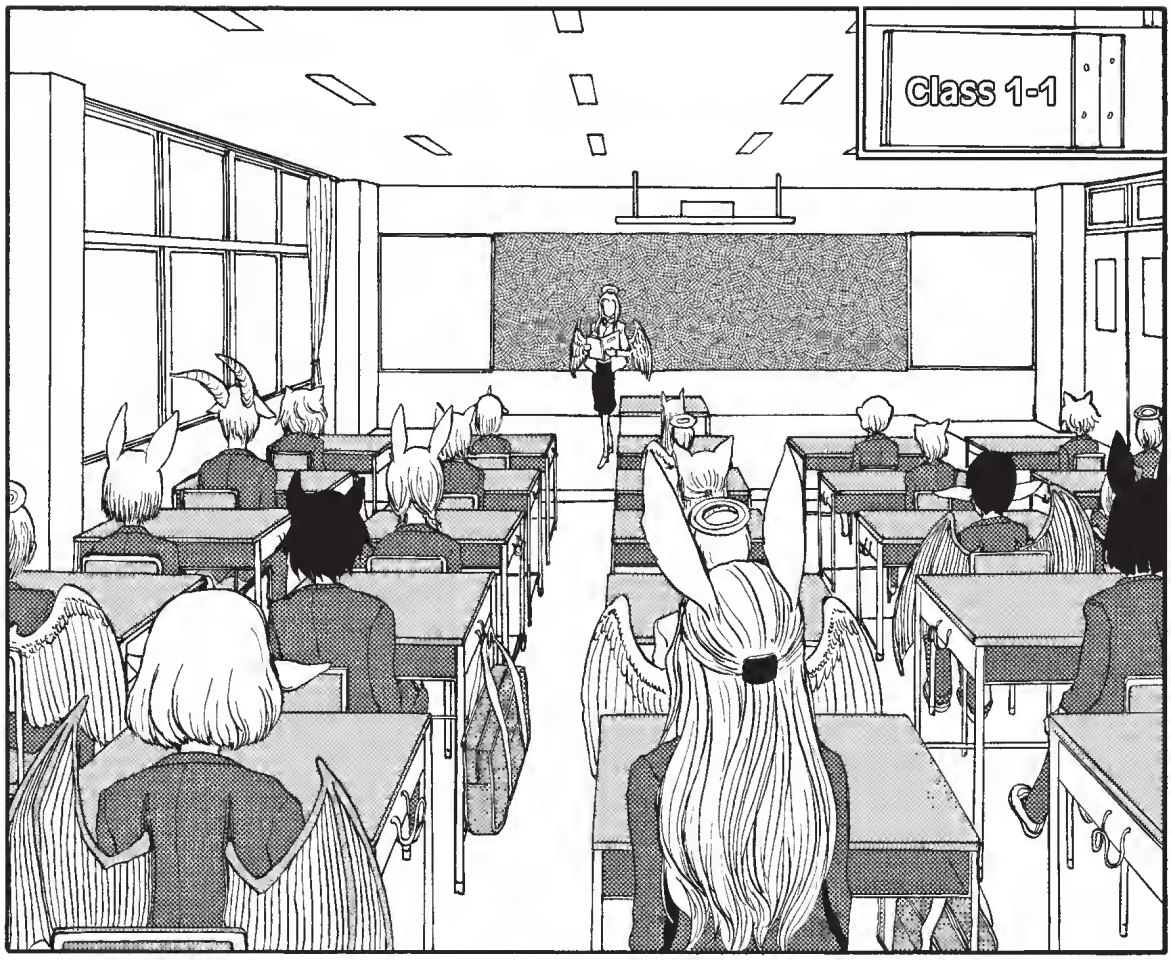
YUUTA-KUN! KOUTA-KUN!
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE. YOU'VE GOTTEN SO TALL!
BIG SIS TAMA-CHAN!
Big brother Yuu-chan! Big brother Kou-chan!
THE CHI-CHANS ARE STARTING SCHOOL TODAY. CAN YOU LOOK AFTER THEM FOR ME?
HM?
OH, SURE.
Hug me!
Hold my hand!
HEY, YUUTA. ARE THEY YOUR GIRL-FRIENDS?
Pedo-phile!
Are they first graders?
HEY! Y-YOU SEE, THEY'RE --!

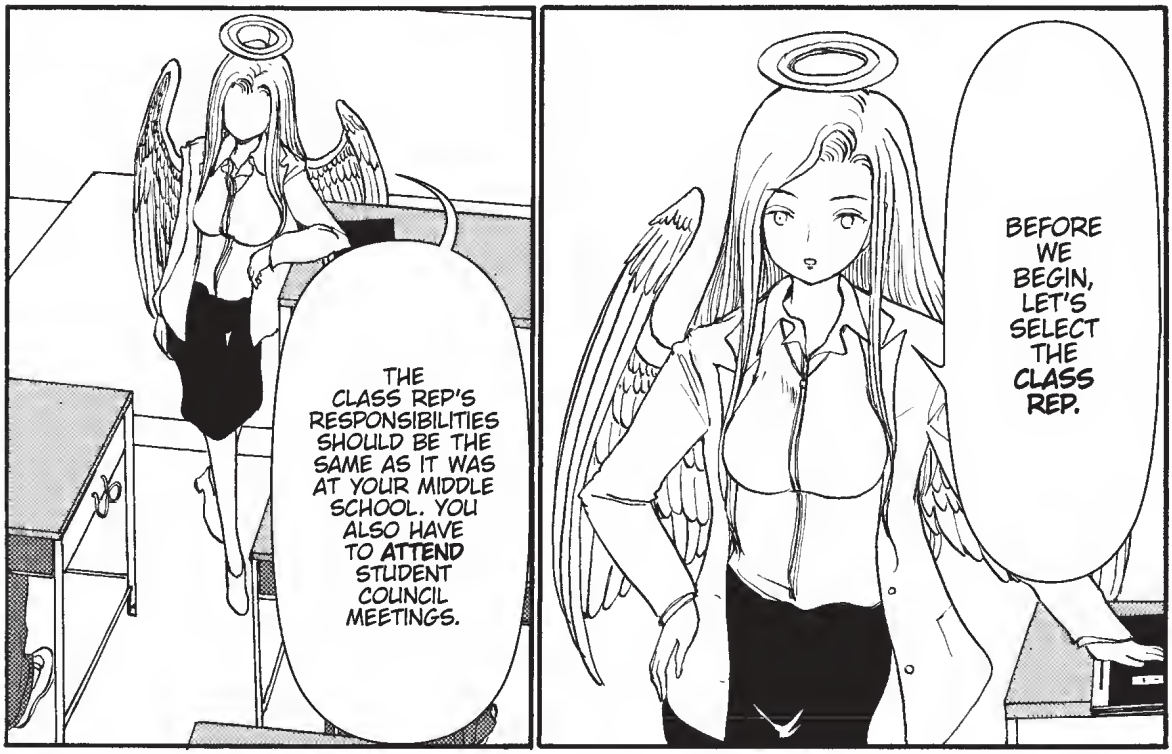

BUT IF THERE'S TROUBLE, LET THIS GIRL TAKE CARE OF EVERY-THING.
WHAT? WHY?
MOST STUDENTS WON'T RISK JEOPARDIZING THEIR FUTURE.
I KNOW IT'S YOUR FIRST CLASS, BUT DON'T BE NERVOUS.
Shin Kanata High School
Faculty Room

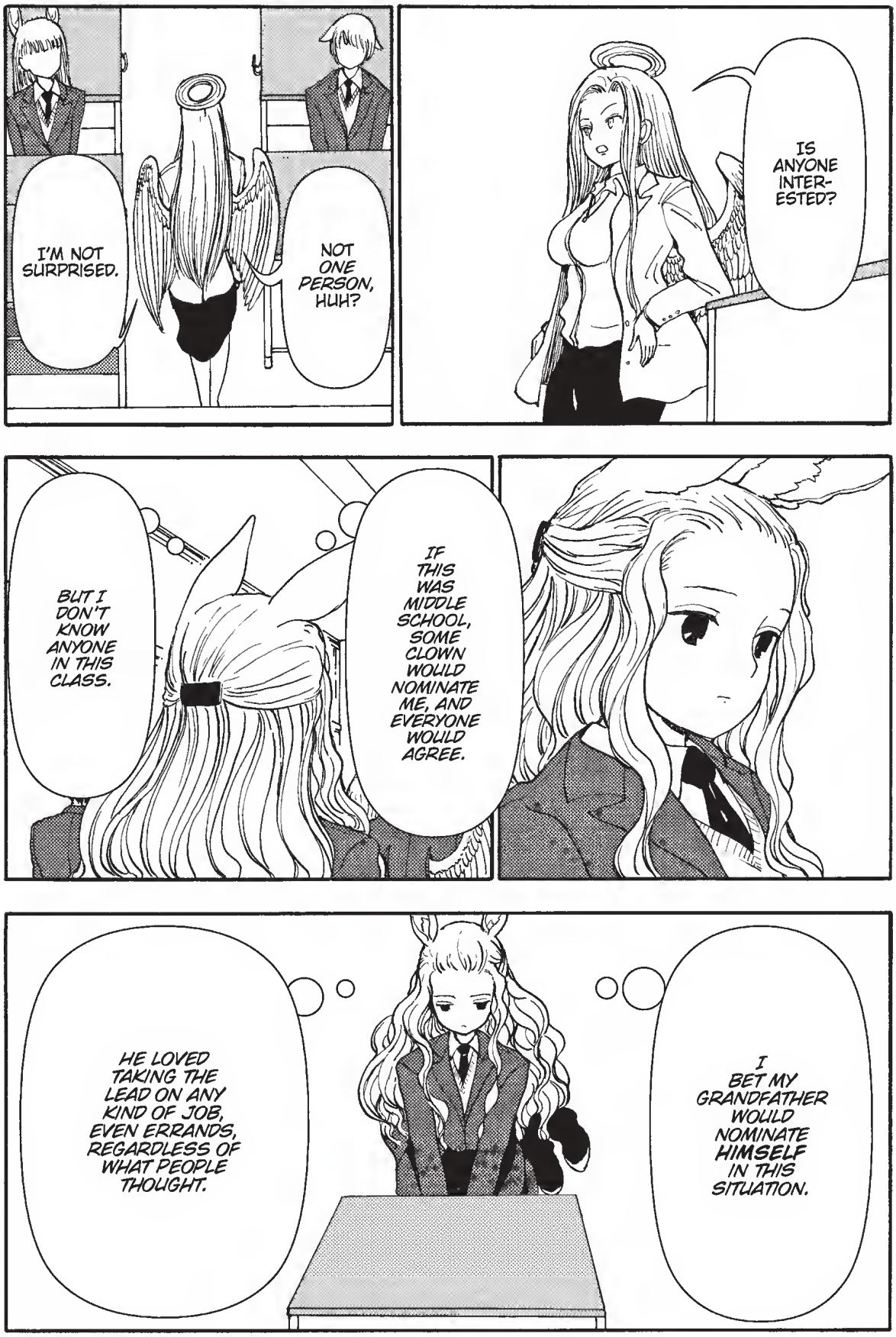

ARE YOU SAYING THEY WON'T TRUST ME?
I'm more of a romance movie fan.
YOU KNOW HOW SOLDIERS IN WAR MOVIES ALWAYS FOLLOW THEIR GRIZZLED SERGEANT OVER THE NEW LIEUTENANT?
SO, SHE'S LIKE A SERGEANT, AND YOU'RE AN OFFICER.
WELL... EACH CLASS IS LIKE A SQUAD.

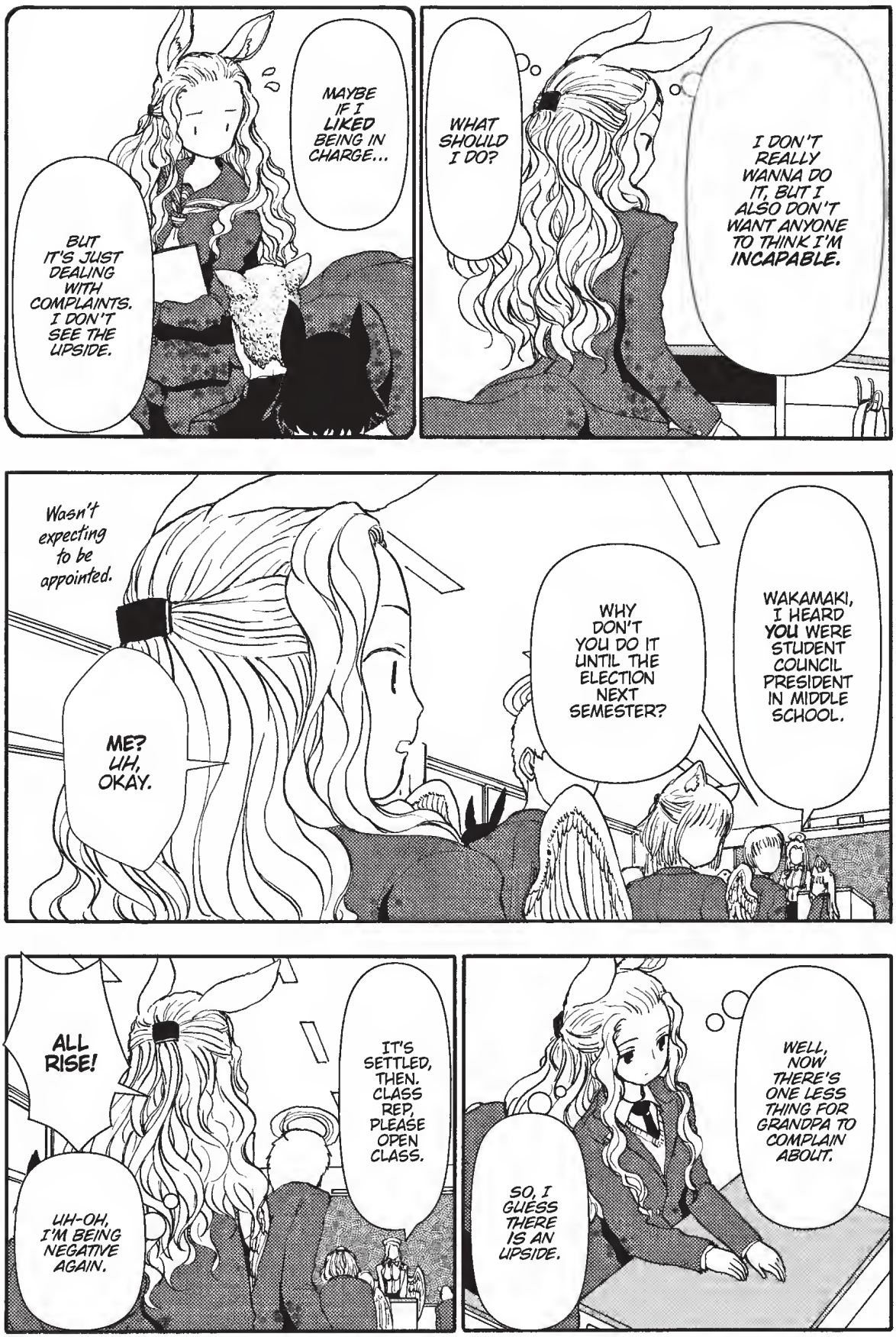

WE COULD BE TOGETHER AGAIN, IF WE'D TAKEN THE SAME ELECTIVE.
YAY! WE'RE IN THE SAME CLASS AGAIN!
This school doesn't have many classes for each grade.
Class 2-1
Class 2-2

WHAT? HOW COME YOU DIDN'T TAKE GEOG-RAPHY?
Beats me.
WE'RE CLASSMATES AGAIN.
NICE.
HEY, GUYS!
OH, YEAH?
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN YOUR CLASS AS WELL.
AND I HOPE SHINO-CHAN IS MAKING FRIENDS.
← only knows Ayaka's incompetent side.
I HOPE AYAKA-CHAN IS OKAY.

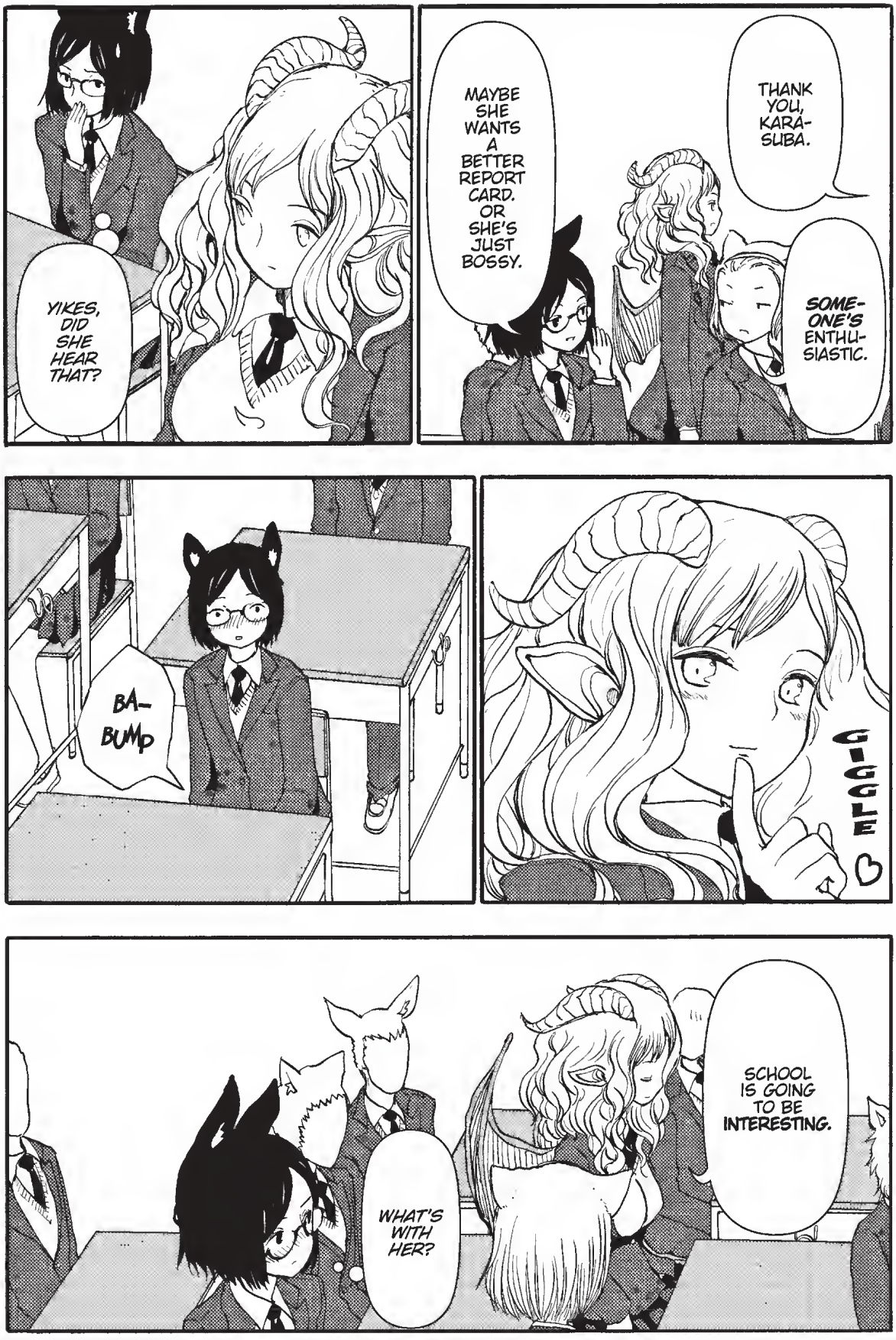

Class 1-1


BEFORE WE BEGIN, LET'S SELECT THE CLASS REP.
THE CLASS REP'S RESPONSIBILITIES SHOULD BE THE SAME AS IT WAS AT YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL. YOU ALSO HAVE TO ATTEND STUDENT COUNCIL MEETINGS.


I'M NOT SURPRISED.
NOT ONE PERSON, HUH?
IS ANYONE INTER-ESTED?
BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYONE IN THIS CLASS.
IF THIS WAS MIDDLE SCHOOL, SOME CLOWN WOULD NOMINATE ME, AND EVERYONE WOULD AGREE.
HE LOVED TAKING THE LEAD ON ANY KIND OF JOB, EVEN ERRANDS, REGARDLESS OF WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT.
I BET MY GRANDFATHER WOULD NOMINATE HIMSELF IN THIS SITUATION.


I DON'T REALLY WANNA DO IT, BUT I ALSO DON'T WANT ANYONE TO THINK I'M INCAPABLE.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
MAYBE IF I LIKED BEING IN CHARGE...
BUT IT'S JUST DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS. I DON'T SEE THE UPSIDE.
WAKAMAKI, I HEARD YOU WERE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
WHY DON'T YOU DO IT UNTIL THE ELECTION NEXT SEMESTER?
Wasn't expecting to be appointed.
ME? UH, OKAY.
WELL, NOW THERE'S ONE LESS THING FOR GRANDPA TO COMPLAIN ABOUT.
SO, I GUESS THERE IS AN UPSIDE.
IT'S SETTLED, THEN. CLASS REP, PLEASE OPEN CLASS.
ALL RISE!
UH-OH, I'M BEING NEGATIVE AGAIN.

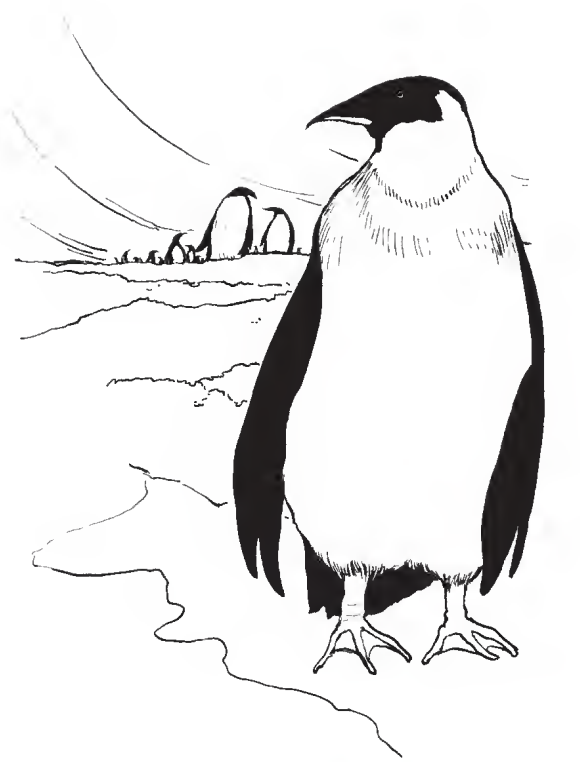
I'LL BE THE CLASS REP!
Class 1-2
YES!
OVER-ACHIEVER?
WHAT'S WITH HER?
WOW, VERY PRO-ACTIVE. ARE YOU SURE?
I'LL VOLUNTEER.
Class 1-3


YIKES, DID SHE HEAR THAT?
MAYBE SHE WANTS A BETTER REPORT CARD. OR SHE'S JUST BOSSY.
THANK YOU, KARASUBA.
SOMEONE'S ENTHUSIASTIC.
BA-BUMP
GIGGLE
WHAT'S WITH HER?
SCHOOL IS GOING TO BE INTERESTING.

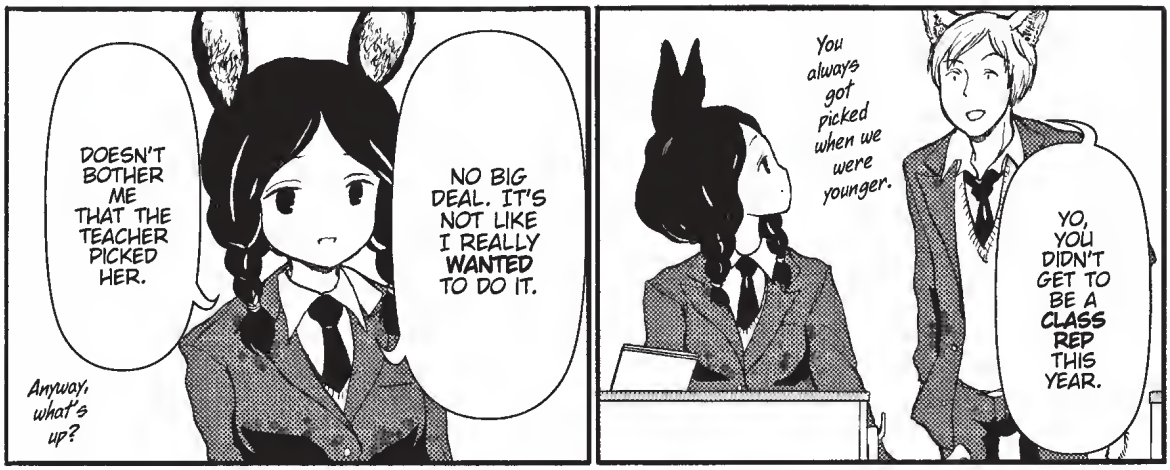
A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 2

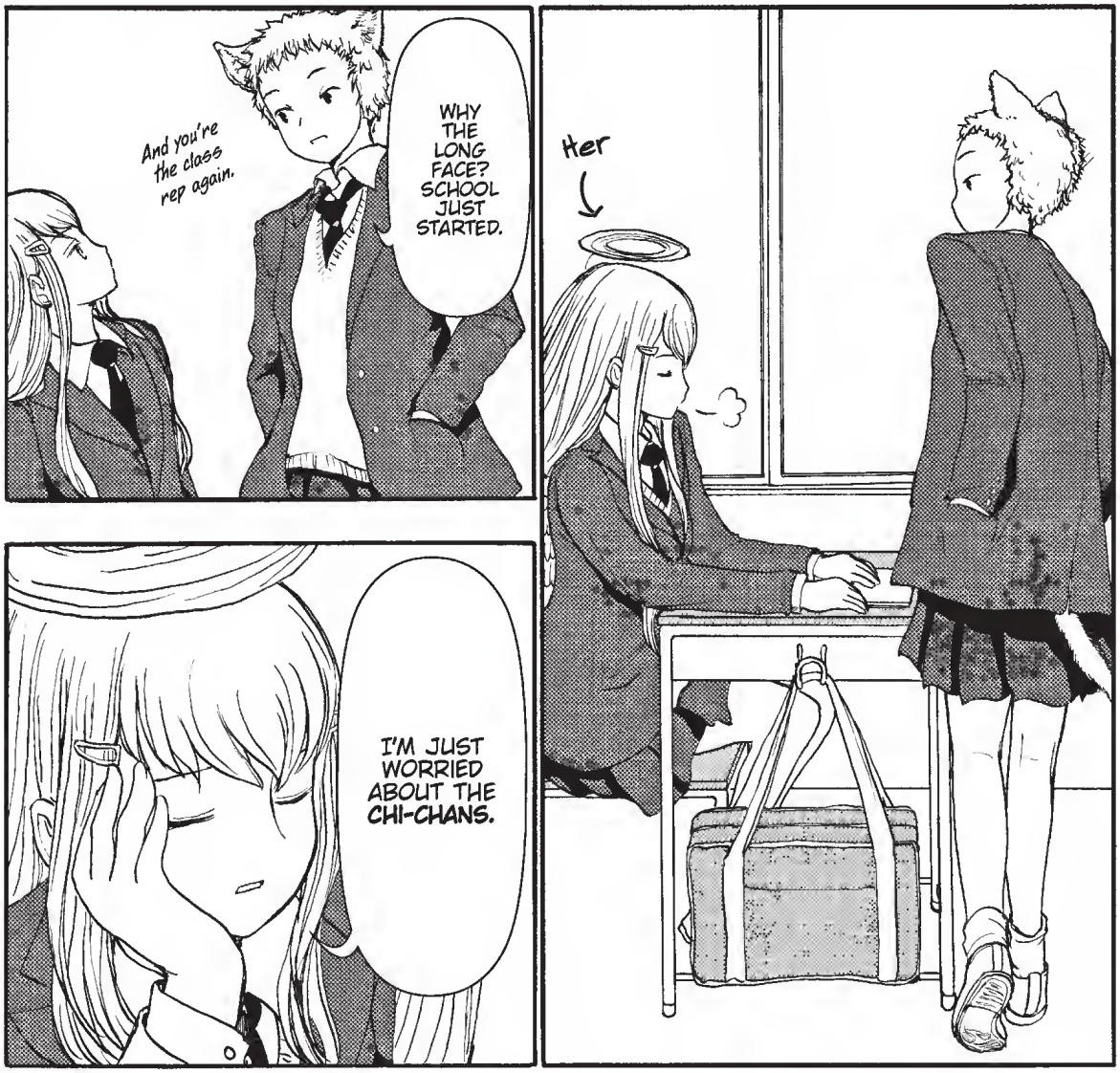
WE KNOW FROM AERIAL PHOTOS AND WITNESS TESTIMONY THAT ANTARCTICA IS COVERED BY ICE YEAR-ROUND. MUCH LIKE THE ICE-COVERED ARCTIC, THERE IS NO EVIDENT PLANT LIFE, BUT SOME HARDY LIFE FORMS STILL SEEM TO THRIVE. SOME TRAVELERS REPORT WITNESSING LARGE GROUPS OF AQUATIC, FLIGHTLESS BIRDS THAT STAND UP STRAIGHT AND TOTTER AROUND TO FORM A VAST HUDDLE ACROSS THE ICE. THESE STRANGE BIRDS, WHO SEEM TO HAVE NO FEAR OF HUMANS, ARE NOW KNOWN AS "PENGUINS." CAN WE SURMISE THAT THE ANTARCTICANS HUNTED THEM FOR CLOTHING, FOOD, FUEL, AND TOOLS, IN A LIFESTYLE SIMILAR TO THAT OF SOME ARCTIC PEOPLES? PERHAPS, BUT THAT MAY NOT FIT THE EVIDENCE. ACCORDING TO ANTARCTICANS, THEY PREFER A WARMER CLIMATE, AND HAVE BUILT UNDERGROUND CITIES POWERED BY GEOTHERMAL ENERGY. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT IN ORDER TO SOLVE THE RIDDLE, WE MAY NEED TO CONSIDER A TIME WHEN ANTARCTICA WAS NEITHER COVERED IN ICE NOR ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.

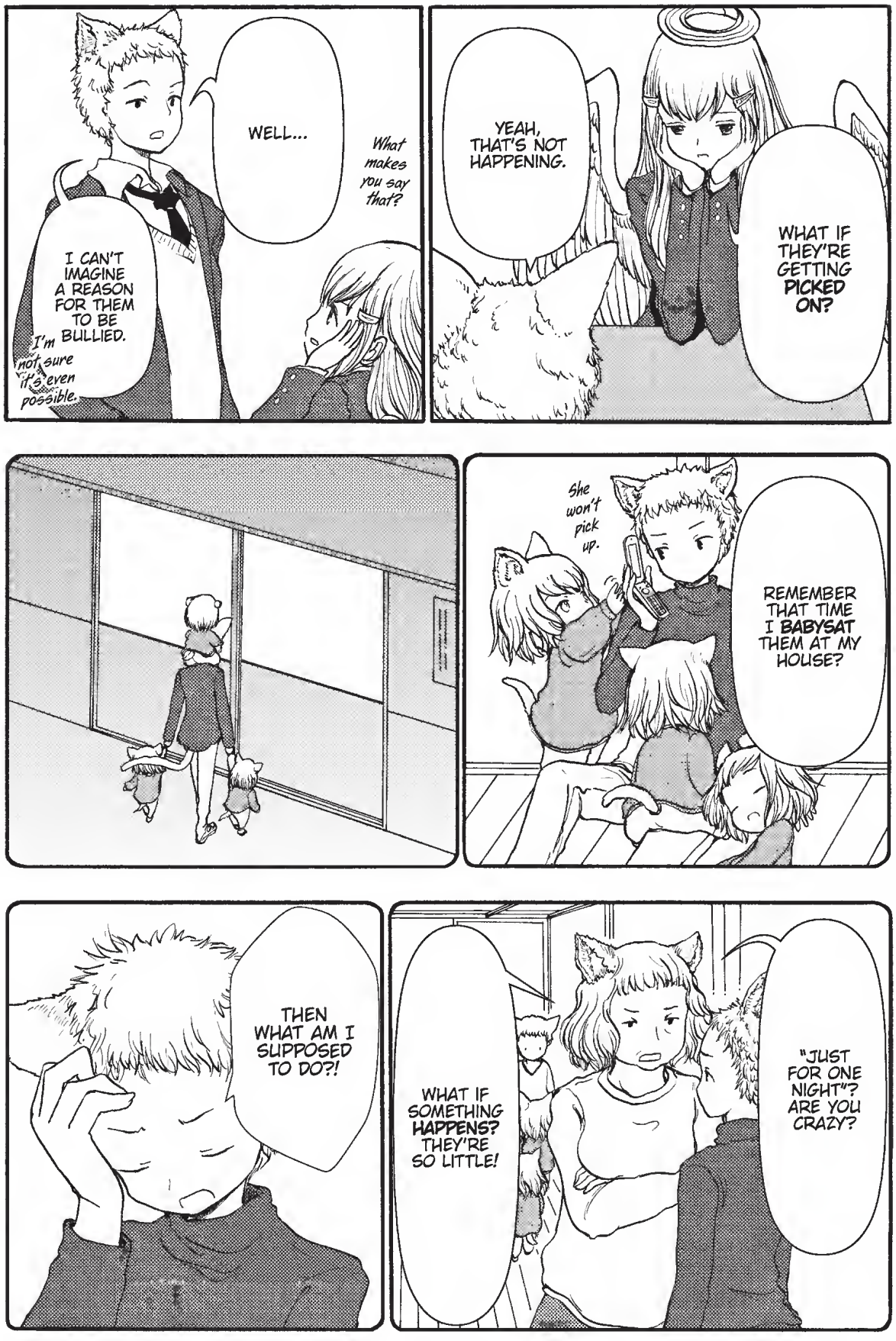


Note: The Great Auk, which inhabited the Arctic, was once called a penguin. However, that name was later given to another species—the Antarctic Penguin—after the Great Auk became extinct in the 1840s. Antarctic Penguins bear a resemblance to the Great Auk, but they are a separate species.

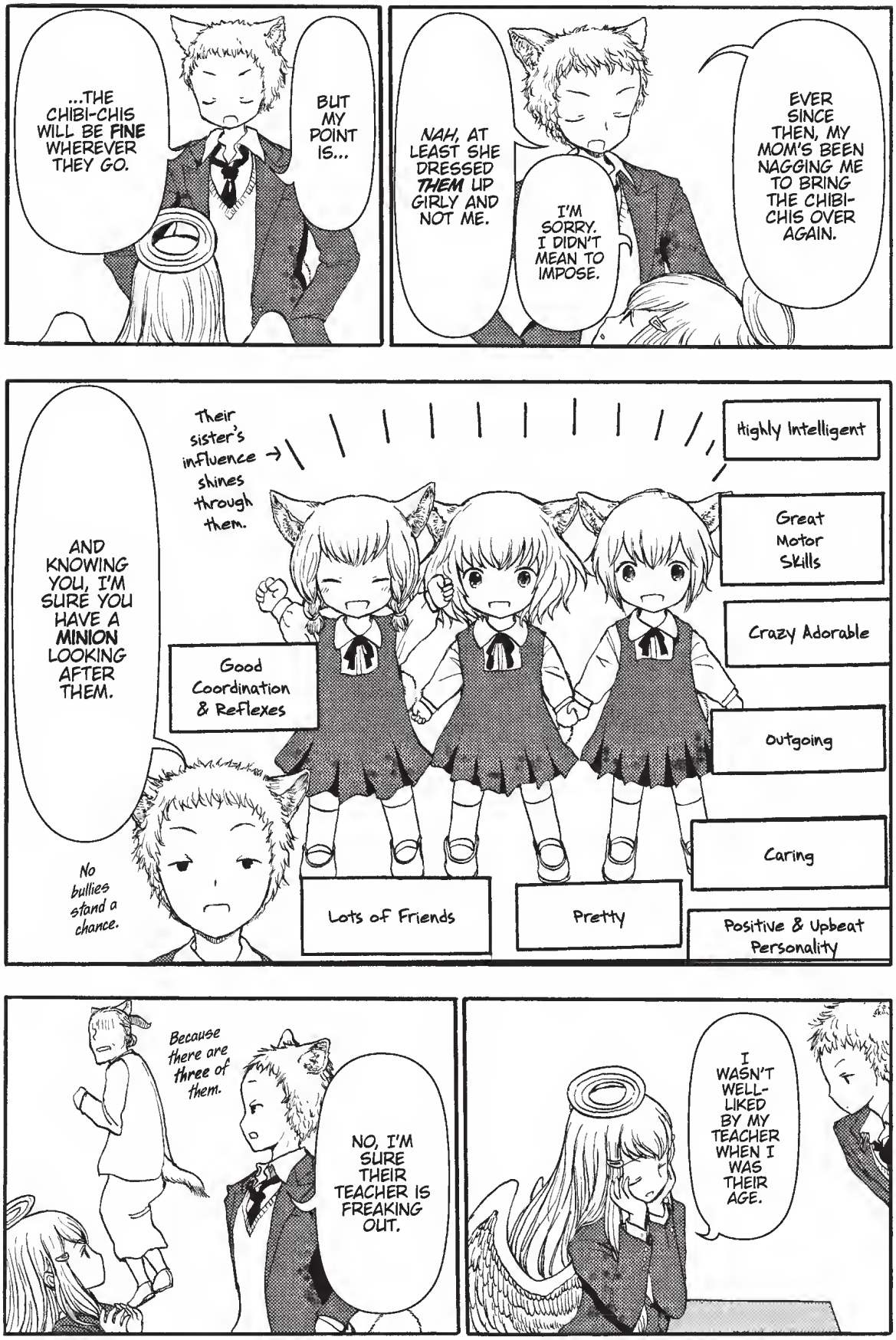

YO, YOU DIDN'T GET TO BE A CLASS REP THIS YEAR.
You always got picked when we were younger.
NO BIG DEAL. IT'S NOT LIKE I REALLY WANTED TO DO IT.
DOESN'T BOTHER ME THAT THE TEACHER PICKED HER.
Anyway, what's up?

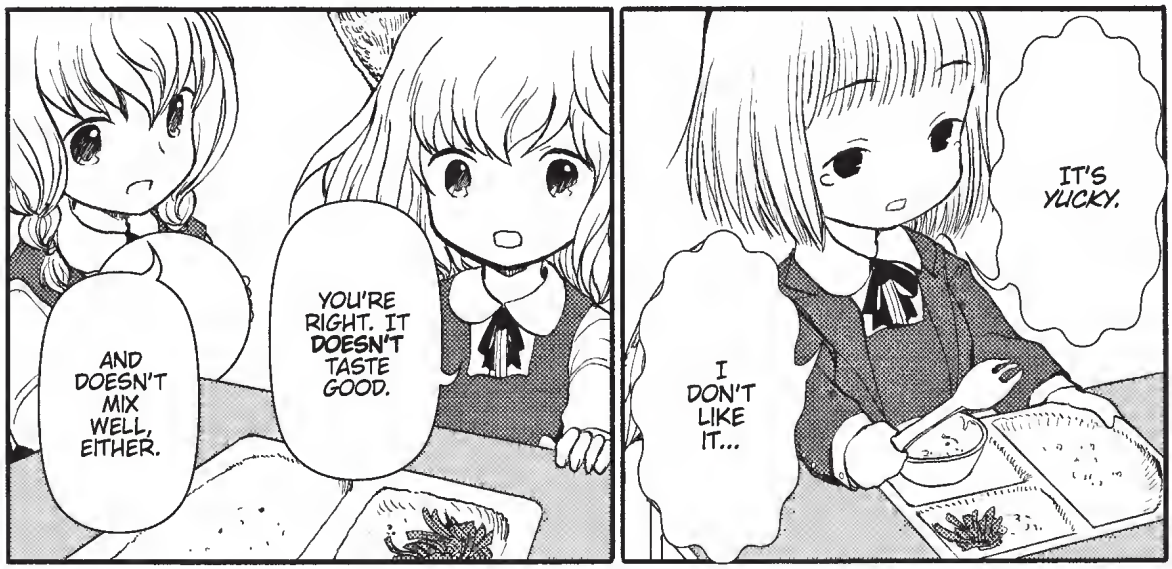
CHAPTER 71


WHY THE LONG FACE? SCHOOL JUST STARTED.
And you're the class rep again.
Her
I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT THE CHI-CHANS.

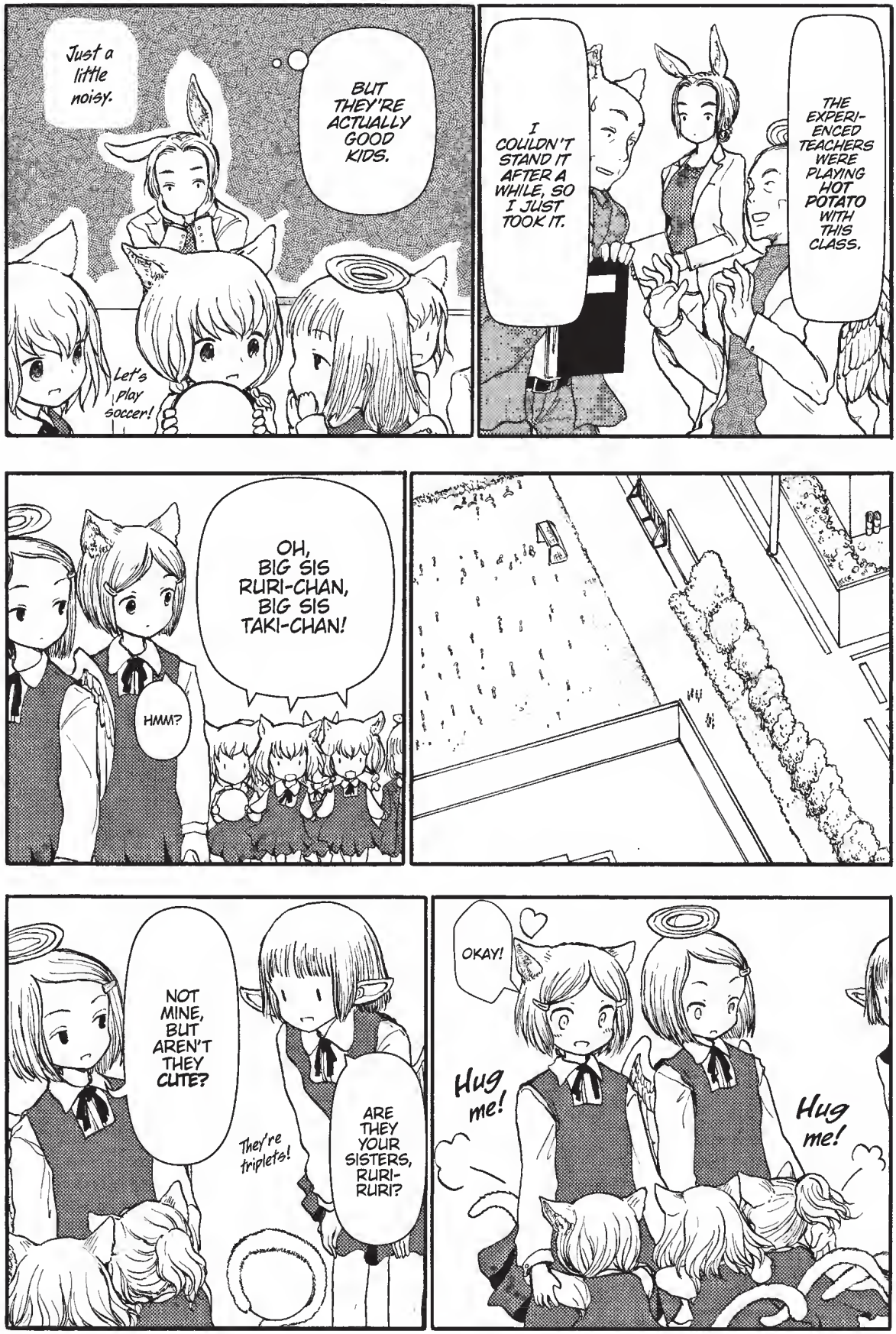

WELL...
What makes you say that?
I CAN'T IMAGINE A REASON FOR THEM TO BE BULLIED.
I'm not sure it's even possible.
YEAH, THAT'S NOT HAPPENING.
WHAT IF THEY'RE GETTING PICKED ON?
She won't pick up.
REMEMBER THAT TIME I BABYSAT THEM AT MY HOUSE?
THEN WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?!
WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS? THEY'RE SO LITTLE!
"JUST FOR ONE NIGHT"? ARE YOU CRAZY?

THEY'LL NEED A CHANGE OF UNDERWEAR, AT LEAST. YOU RUN TO THE STORE.
OKAY. FINE.
YAY!
YAY!
I'M BACK.
IS THERE ANY DINNER LEFT FOR ME?
NOPE, SORRY.
Wait, where did all these clothes come from?

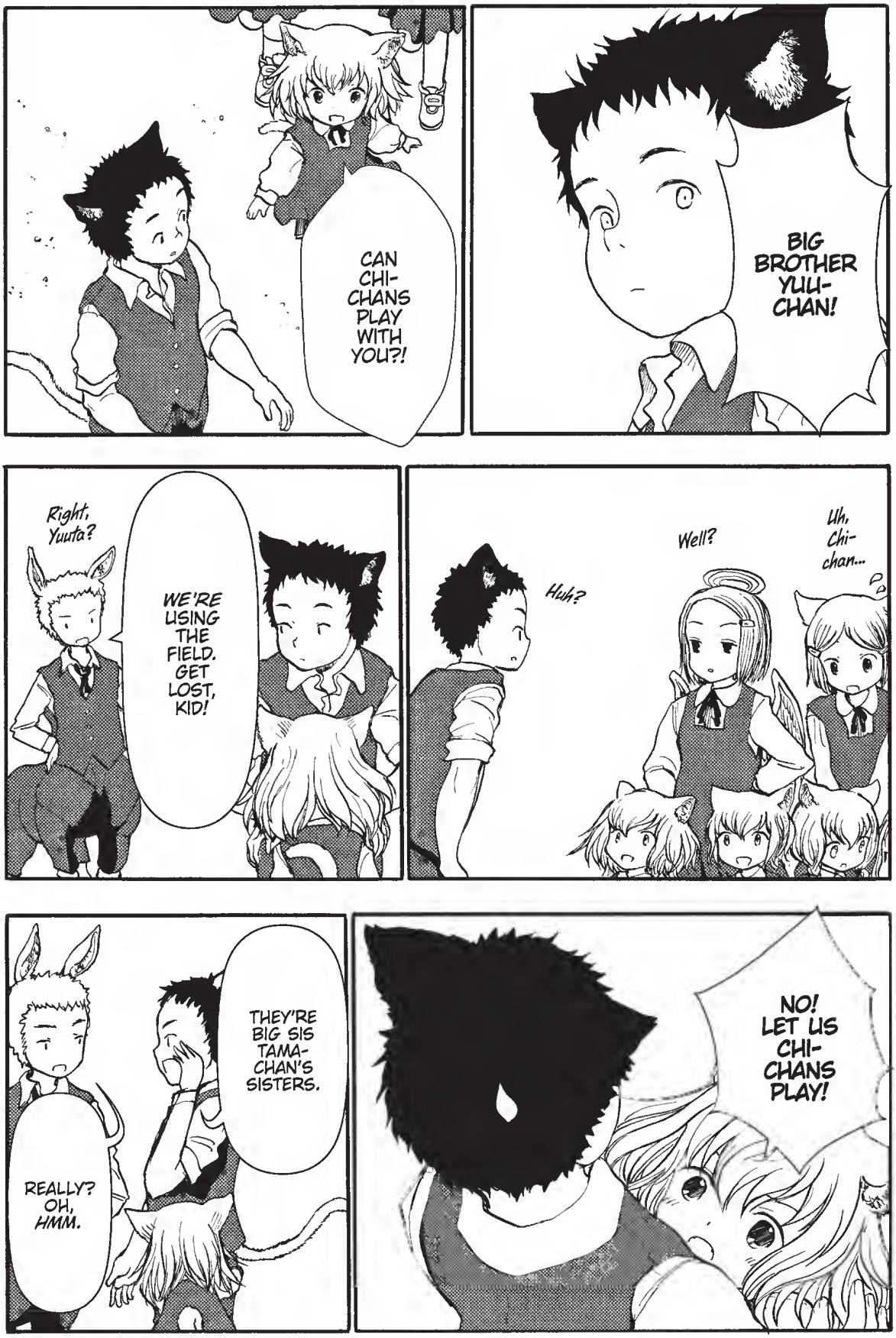

...THE CHIBI-CHIS WILL BE FINE WHEREVER THEY GO.
BUT MY POINT IS...
NAH, AT LEAST SHE DRESSED THEM UP GIRLY AND NOT ME.
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO IMPOSE.
EVER SINCE THEN, MY MOM'S BEEN NAGGING ME TO BRING THE CHIBI-CHIS OVER AGAIN.
AND KNOWING YOU, I'M SURE YOU HAVE A MINION LOOKING AFTER THEM.
No bullies stand a chance.
Their sister's influence shines through them.
Highly Intelligent
Great Motor Skills
Crazy Adorable
Outgoing
Caring
Positive & Upbeat Personality
Pretty
Lots of Friends
Good Coordination & Reflexes
Because there are three of them.
NO, I'M SURE THEIR TEACHER IS FREAKING OUT.
I WASN'T WELL-LIKED BY MY TEACHER WHEN I WAS THEIR AGE.

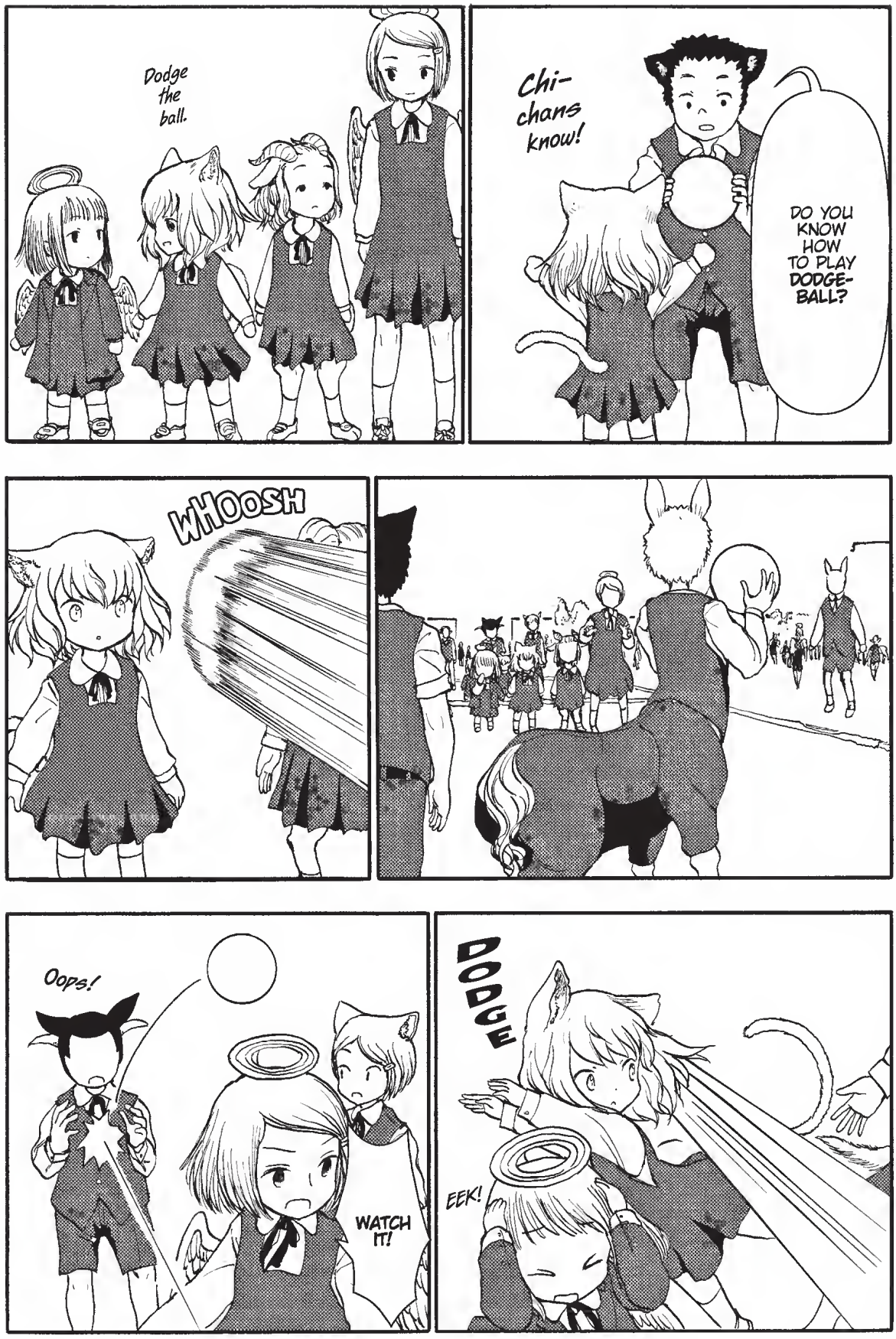

I DON'T LIKE IT...
IT'S YUCKY.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT DOESN'T TASTE GOOD.
AND DOESN'T MIX WELL, EITHER.

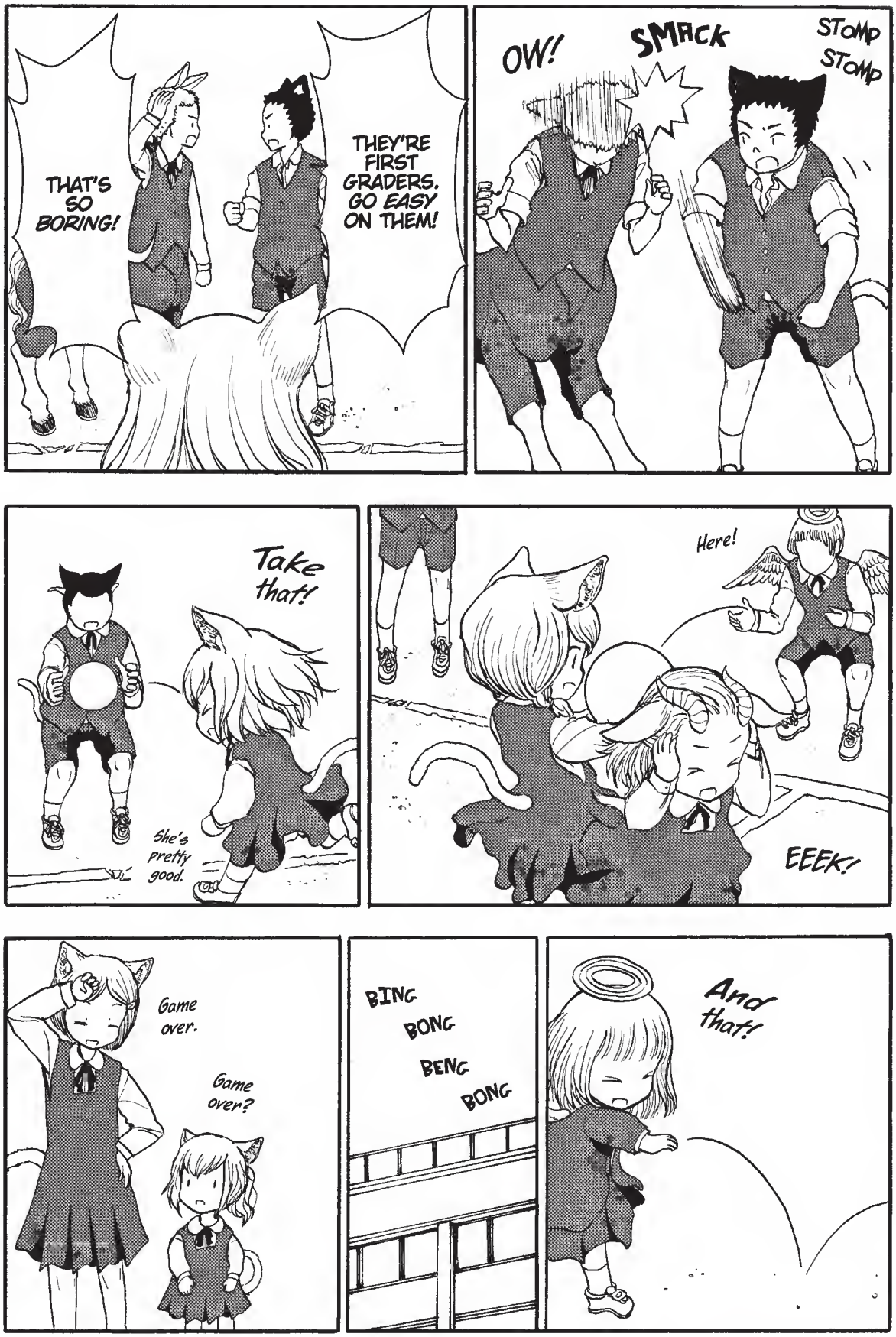
MAYBE JUST EAT IT REAL FAST.
AND THEN WE'LL GO PLAY!
MUNCH MUNCH
CLAP CLAP
MUNCH
PAT PAT
We'll help you clean up.

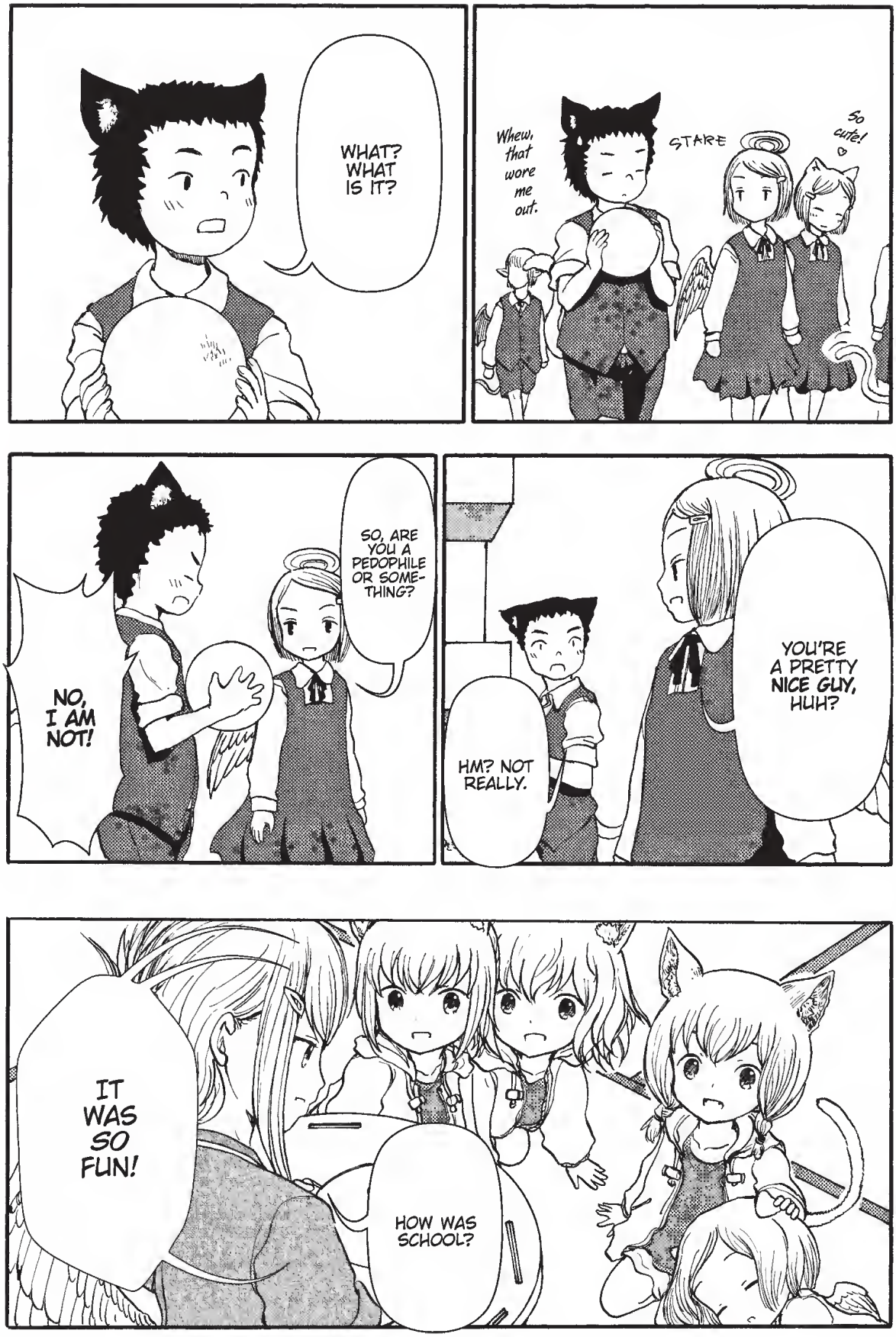

Just a little noisy.
BUT THEY'RE ACTUALLY GOOD KIDS.
Let's play soccer!
I COULDN'T STAND IT AFTER A WHILE, SO I JUST TOOK IT.
THE EXPERI-ENCED TEACHERS WERE PLAYING HOT POTATO WITH THIS CLASS.
OH, BIG SIS RURI-CHAN, BIG SIS TAKI-CHAN!
HMM?
NOT MINE, BUT AREN'T THEY CUTE?
They're triplets!
ARE THEY YOUR SISTERS, RURI-RURI?
OKAY!
Hug me!
Hug me!

PLAY SOCCER WITH US!
She speaks very well for her age!
I WISH WE COULD PLAY.
THEY ARE! LIKE LITTLE DOLLS.
BUT THOSE BOYS ARE USING THE FIELD.
Get him, Yuuta!
THERE'S BIG BROTHER YUU-CHAN!


CAN CHI-CHANS PLAY WITH YOU?!
BIG BROTHER YUU-CHAN!
Right, Yuuta?
WE'RE USING THE FIELD. GET LOST, KID!
Huh?
Well?
Uh, Chi-chan...
THEY'RE BIG SIS TAMA-CHAN'S SISTERS.
REALLY? OH, HMM.
NO! LET US CHI-CHANS PLAY!


Dodge the ball.
Chi-chans know!
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PLAY DODGE-BALL?
WHOOSH
Oops!
WATCH IT!
DODGE
EEK!

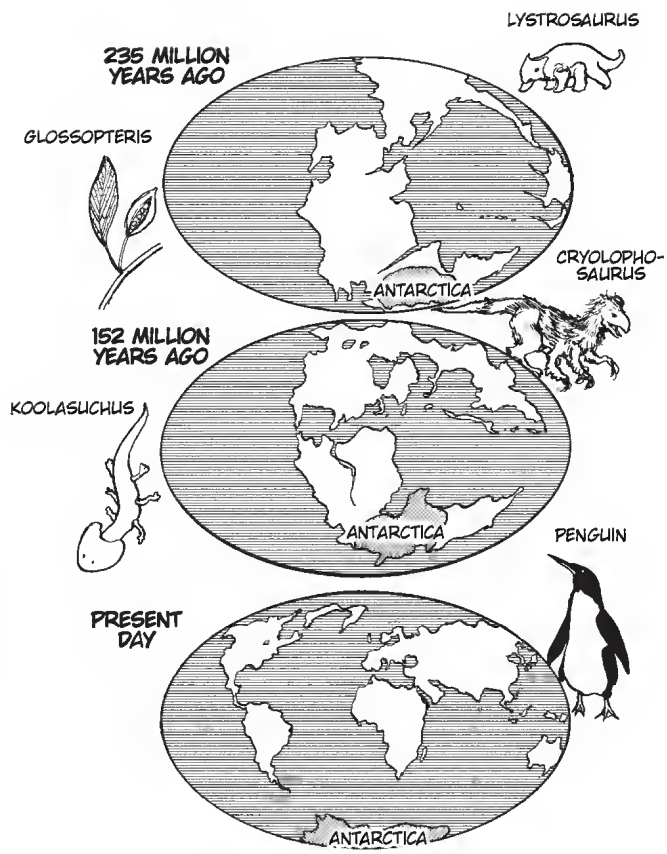

THAT'S SO BORING!
THEY'RE FIRST GRADERS. GO EASY ON THEM!
OW!
SMACK
STOMP STOMP
Take that!
She's pretty good.
Here!
EEEK!
Game over.
Game over?
BING BONG BENG BONG
And that!


WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
Whew, that wore me out.
STARE
So cute!
SO, ARE YOU A PEDOPHILE OR SOMETHING?
NO, I AM NOT!
YOU'RE A PRETTY NICE GUY, HUH?
HM? NOT REALLY.
IT WAS SO FUN!
HOW WAS SCHOOL?

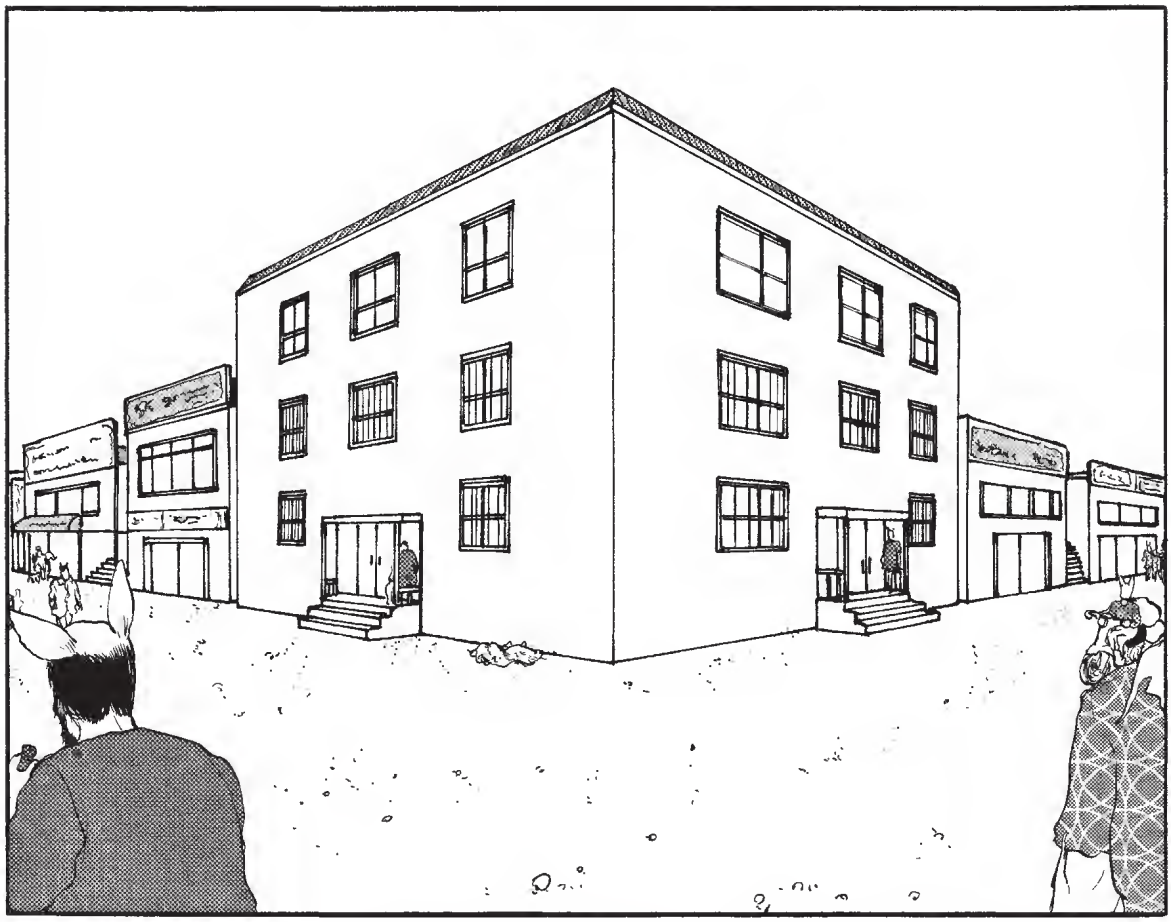
A CentaUr's Life

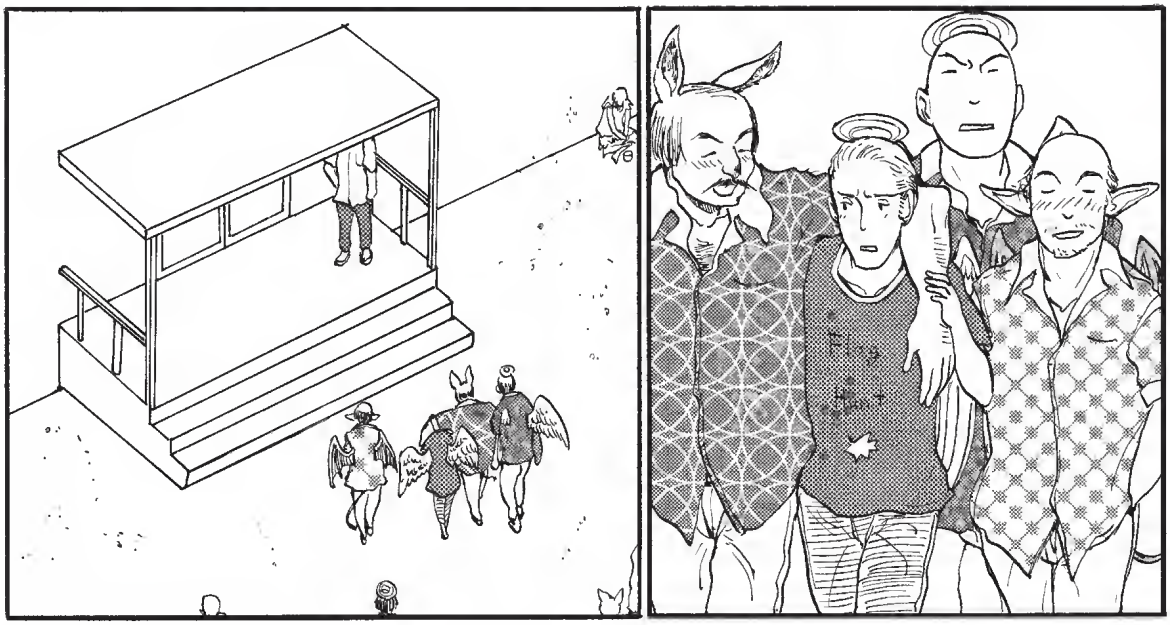
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 3

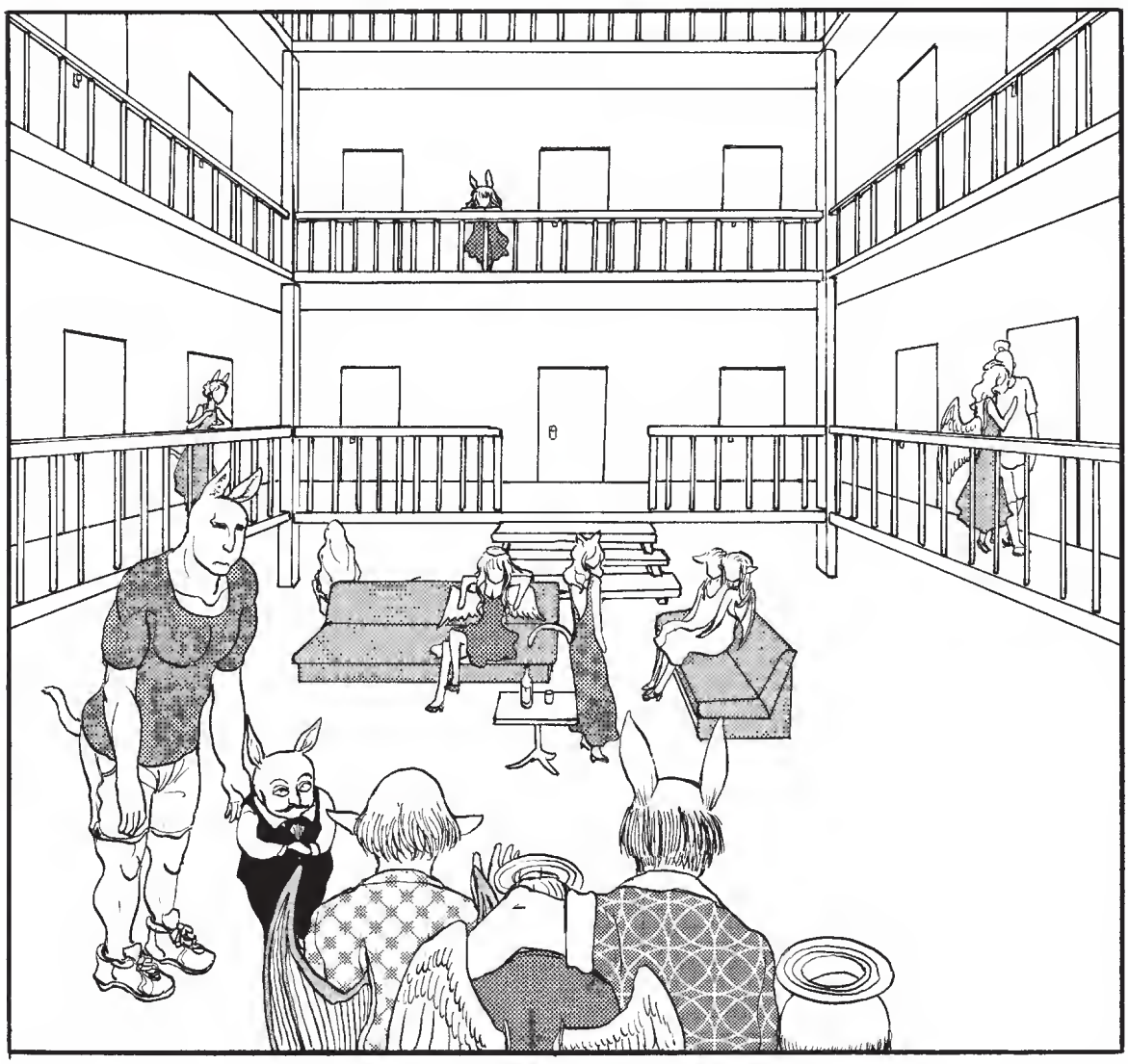
DUE TO THE CONSTANT SLOW MOVEMENT OF TECTONIC PLATES, THE CONTINENT WE CALL ANTARCTICA HAS BEEN JOINING WITH AND SEPARATING FROM VARIOUS LARGER LANDMASSES FOR HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF YEARS. AROUND 250 MILLION YEARS AGO, ALL THE CONTINENTS ON EARTH WERE JOINED AS ONE SINGLE SUPERCONTINENT KNOWN AS PANGAEA. AT THE TIME, MANY PLANTS AND ANIMALS SUCH AS LYSTROSAURUS (A MAMMAL-LIKE REPTILE) AND GLOSSOPTERIS (A GYMNOSPERM) THRIVED ACROSS PANGAEA, INCLUDING THE PART THAT WOULD LATER BECOME ANTARCTICA. FOSSIL REMAINS OF THESE LIFEFORMS LATER BECAME EVIDENCE FOR THE THEORY OF CONTINENTAL DRIFT. EVENTUALLY, THE SUPERCONTINENT BROKE APART INTO SMALLER LANDMASSES. THE ONE KNOWN AS GONDWANA WAS MADE UP OF MOST OF THE LAND IN THE PRESENT SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE, AGAIN INCLUDING WHAT WOULD LATER BECOME ANTARCTICA, AND WAS FORESTED THROUGHOUT WITH A TROPICAL OR SUBTROPICAL CLIMATE. OVER TIME, THIS LANDMASS BROKE APART AS WELL, WITH AUSTRALIA AND THEN SOUTH AMERICA FINALLY PULLING AWAY TO COMPLETE ANTARCTICA'S ISOLATION, LONG AFTER THE DINOSAURS HAD GONE EXTINCT AND THE AGE OF MAMMALS HAD BEGUN. THE SEPARATION OF SOUTH AMERICA ALLOWED FOR THE ANTARCTIC CIRCUMPOLAR CURRENT TO FORM, AND THE FORESTS SPANNING THE CONTINENT SLOWLY GAVE WAY TO ICE. ONCE A LUSH TROPICAL LAND, ANTARCTICA HAS NOW BEEN LOCKED IN DEEP FREEZE FOR ABOUT 20 MILLION YEARS.

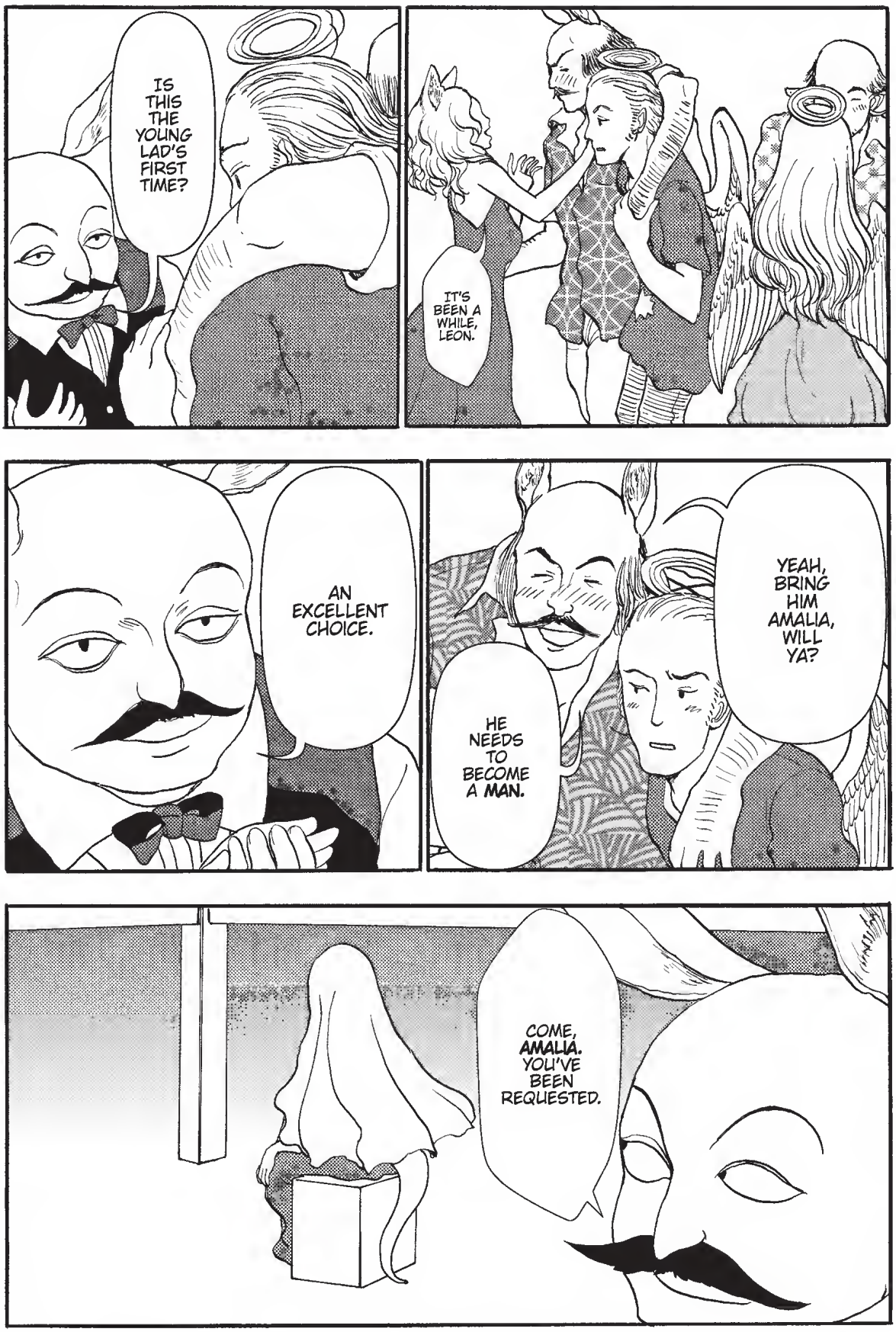


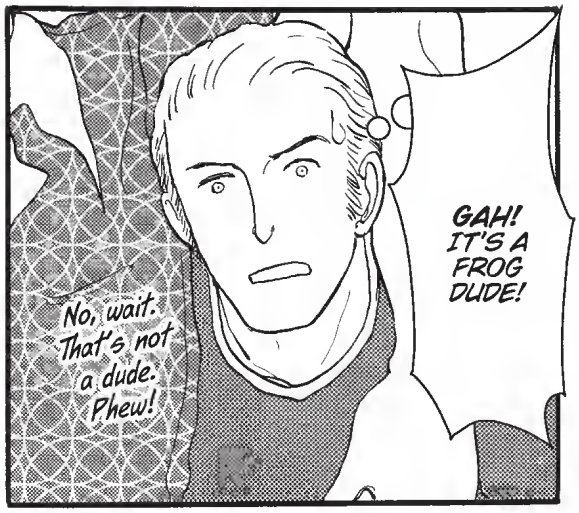
CHAPTER 72



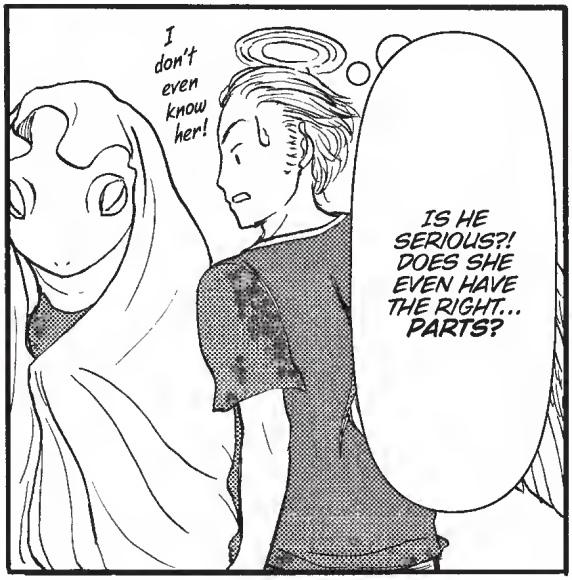


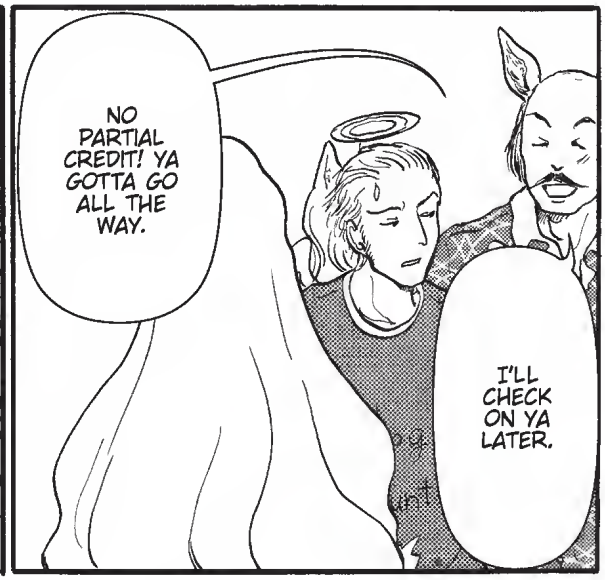


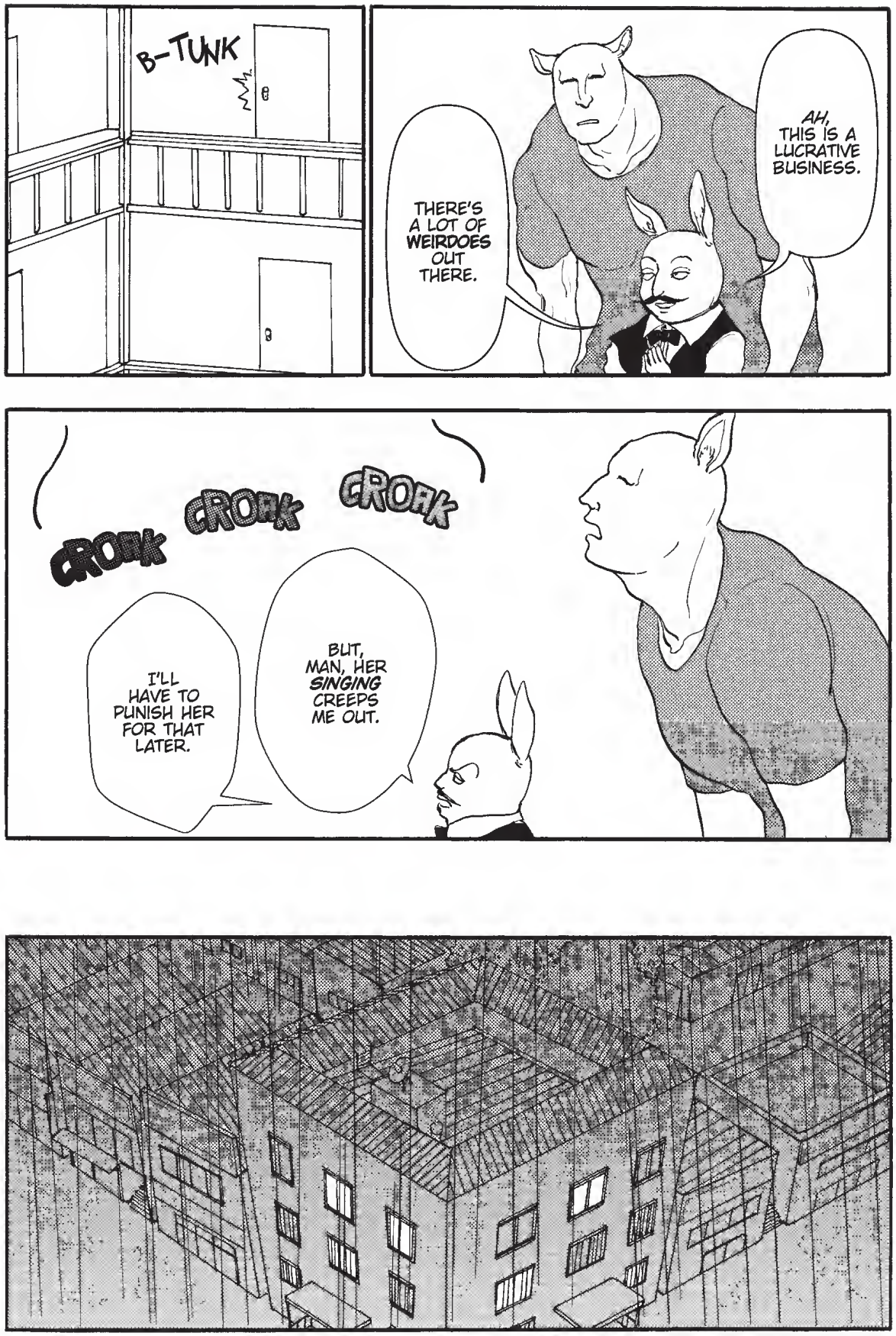

IS THIS THE YOUNG LAD'S FIRST TIME?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, LEON.
AN EXCELLENT CHOICE.
HE NEEDS TO BECOME A **MAN.**
YEAH, BRING HIM AMALIA, WILL YA?
COME, **AMALIA.** YOU'VE BEEN REQUESTED.


GAH! IT'S A FROG DUDE!
No, wait. That's not a dude. Phew!

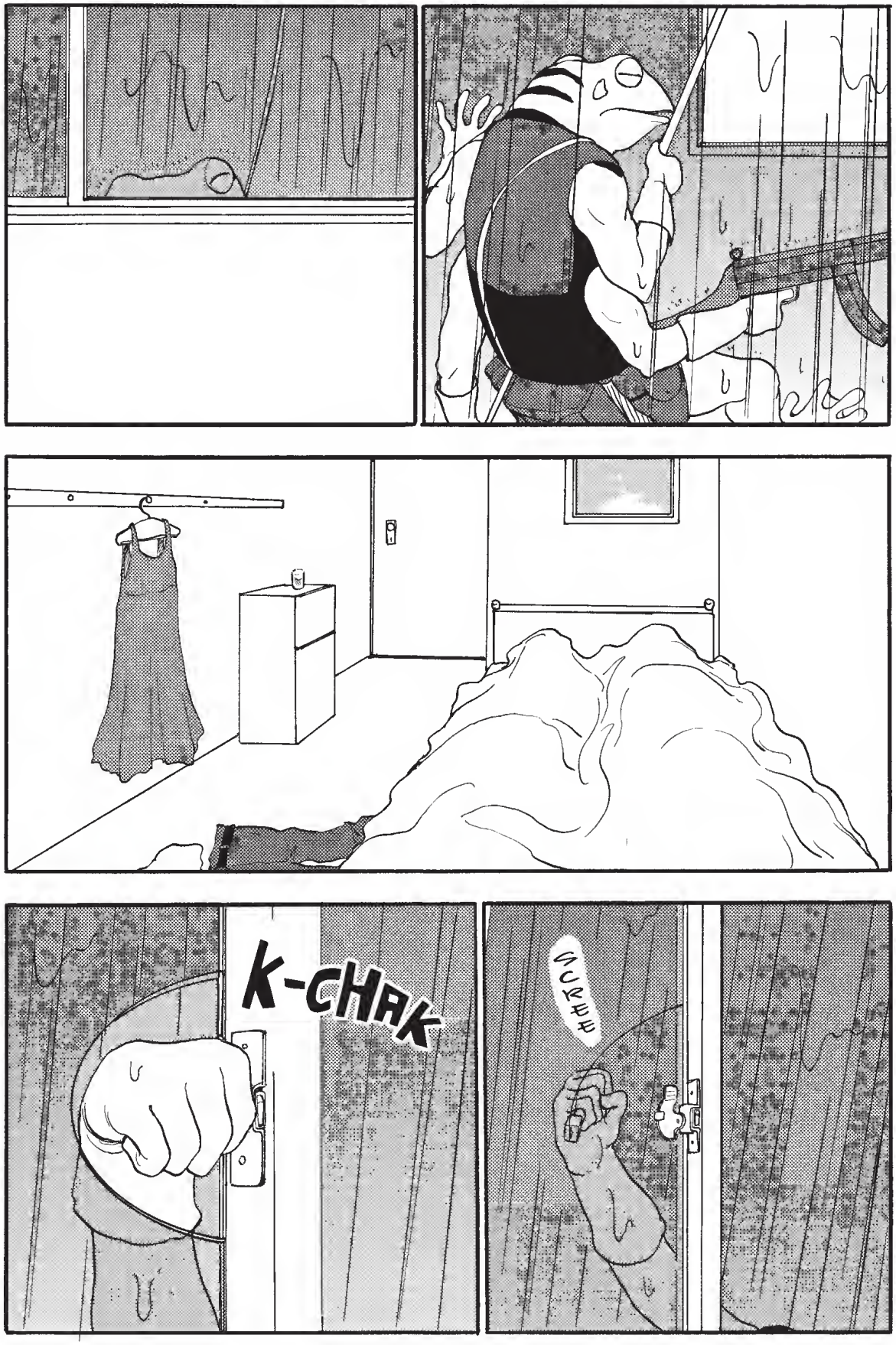
NOW, GO BECOME A MAN!
SMACK

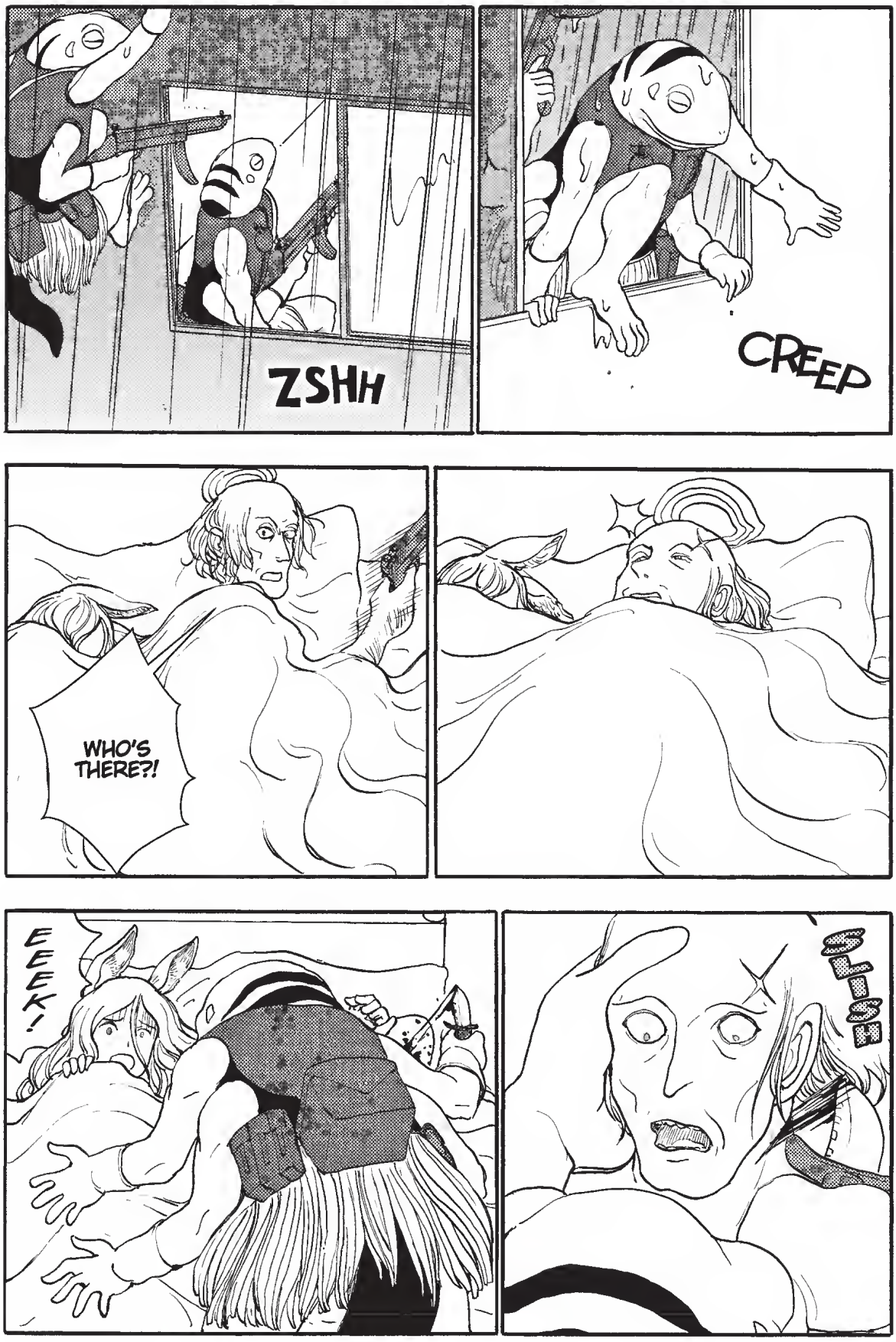

I don't even know her!
IS HE SERIOUS?! DOES SHE EVEN HAVE THE RIGHT... PARTS?

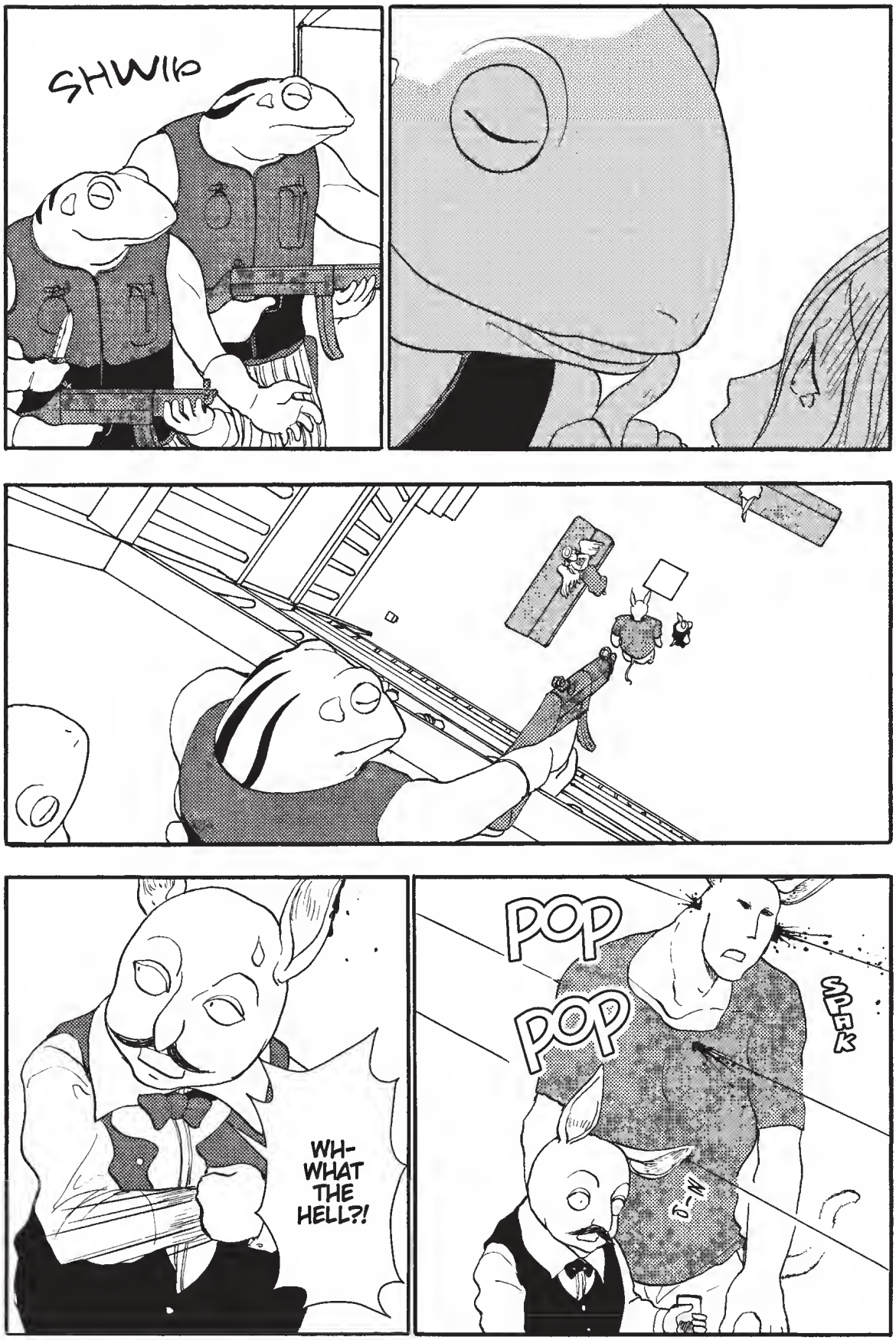

NO PARTIAL CREDIT! YA GOTTA GO ALL THE WAY.
I'LL CHECK ON YA LATER.

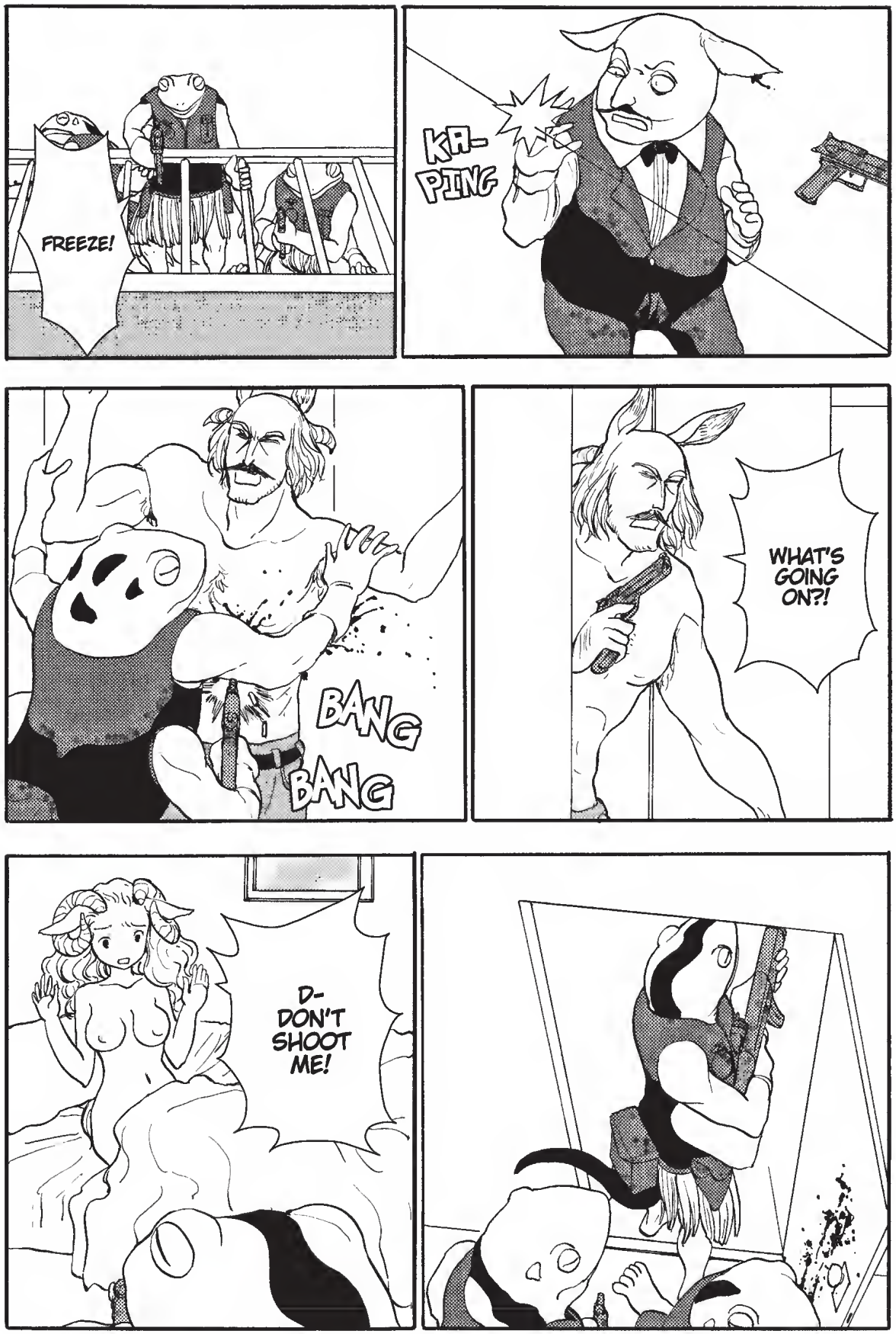

B-TUNK
THERE'S A LOT OF WEIRDOES OUT THERE.
AH, THIS IS A LUCRATIVE BUSINESS.
CROAK
CROAK
CROAK
I'LL HAVE TO PUNISH HER FOR THAT LATER.
BUT, MAN, HER SINGING CREEPS ME OUT.

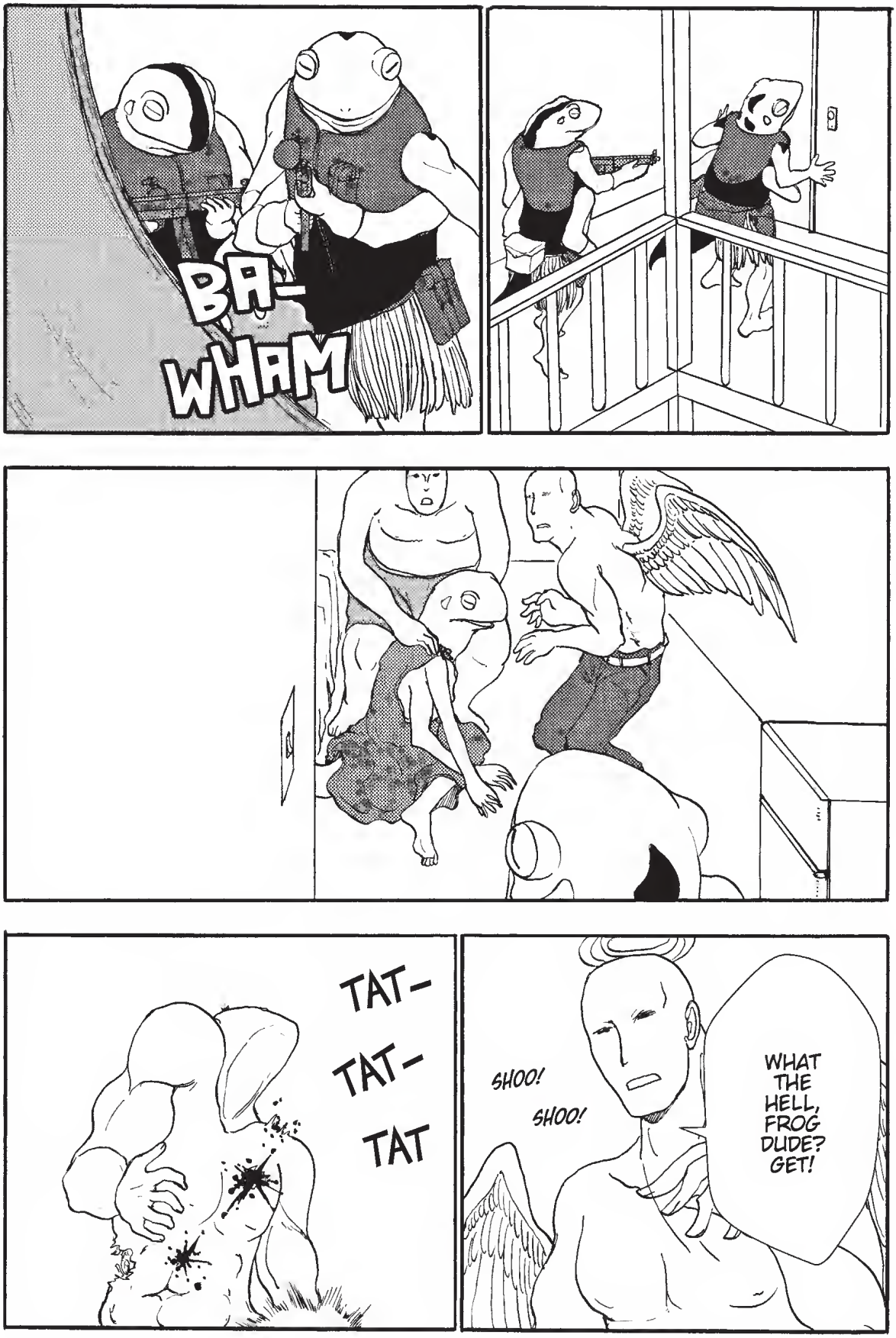
CROAK
CROAK
CROAK
UGH! MAKE HER SHUT UP!
ZSHH
I HATE THIS RAIN.
It dries up the business.
THOSE DAMN FROGS.
IT AIN'T AMALIA, BOSS.
IT'S THE REAL FROGS OUTSIDE.
CROOOAK

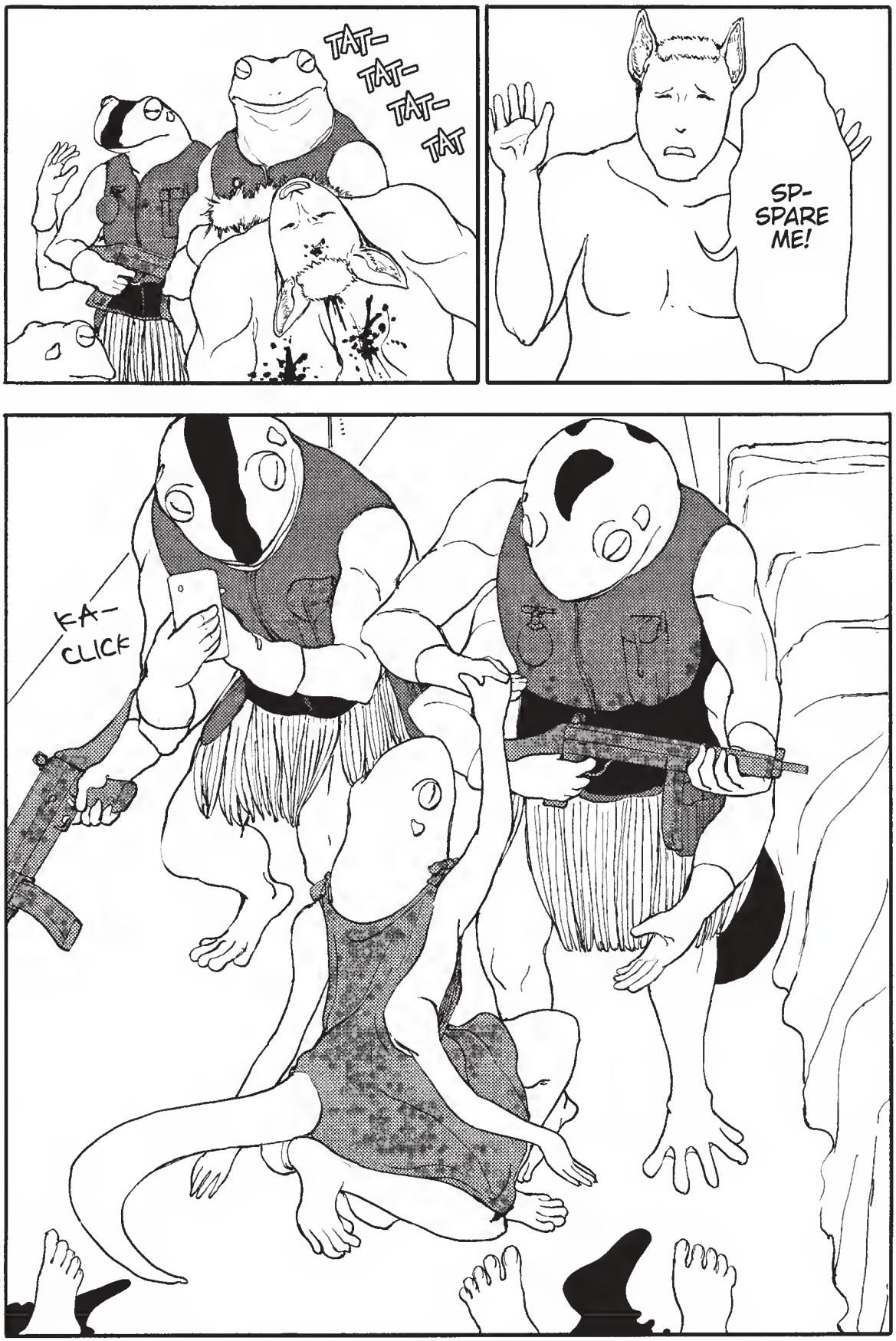

K-CHAK
SCREEE


ZSHH
CREEP
WHO'S THERE?!
EEEK!
SLISH

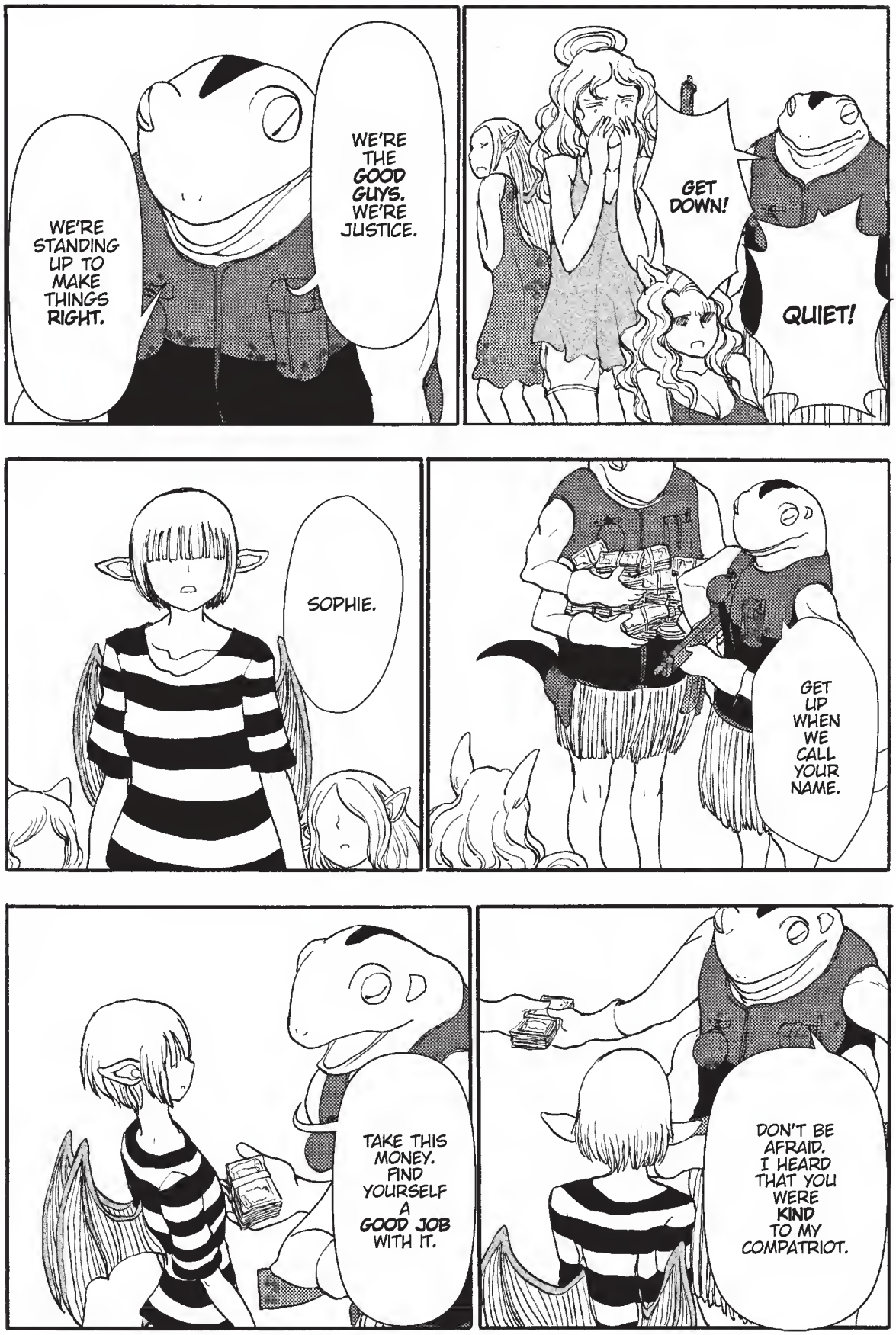

SHWIP
WH-
WHAT
THE
HELL?!
POP
POP
SPLAK
U-M


FREEZE!
KA-
PING
BANG
BANG
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
D-
DON'T SHOOT ME!

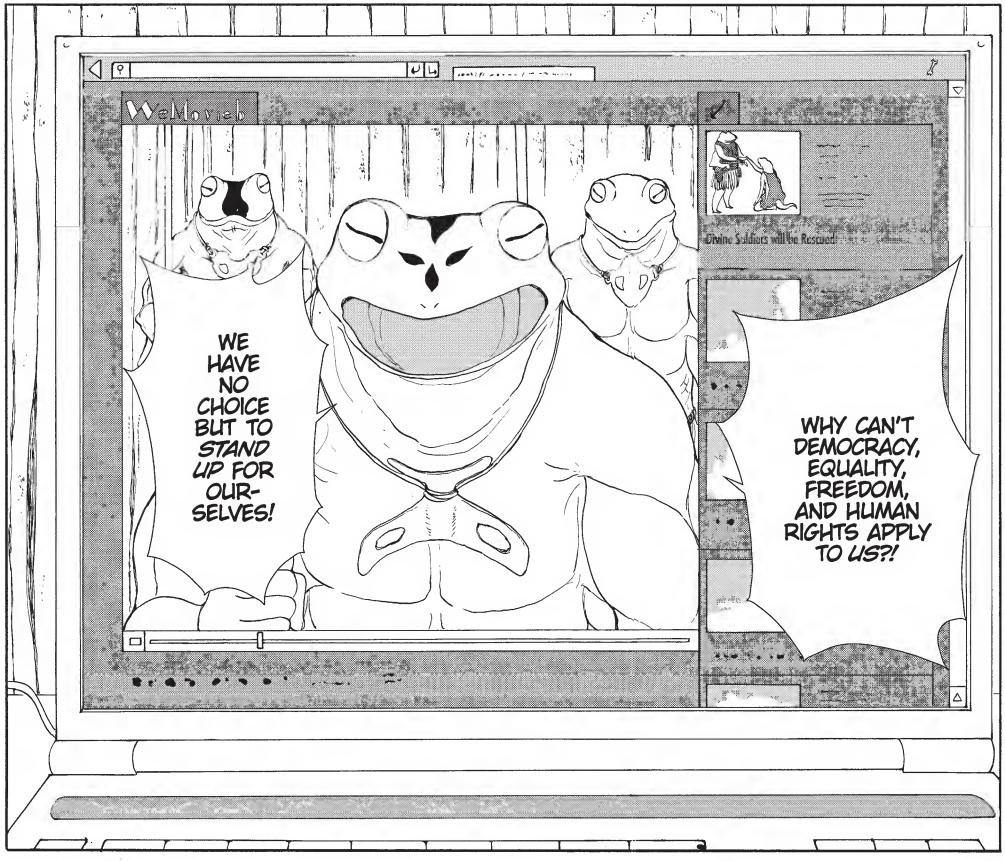

BA-
WHAM
TAT-
TAT-
TAT
SHOO!
SHOO!
WHAT THE HELL, FROG DUDE? GET!

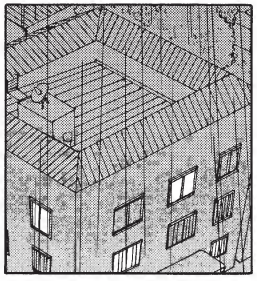

TAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT
SP-
SPARE
ME!
KA-
CLICK

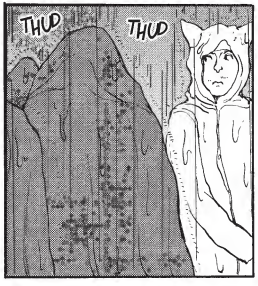
BLAM
JUST LET ME LIVE!
HERE, TAKE IT ALL!
EEEEK!
TAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT

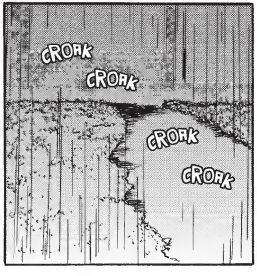

WE'RE THE GOOD GUYS. WE'RE JUSTICE.
WE'RE STANDING UP TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.
GET DOWN!
QUIET!
SOPHIE.
GET UP WHEN WE CALL YOUR NAME.
TAKE THIS MONEY. FIND YOURSELF A GOOD JOB WITH IT.
DON'T BE AFRAID. I HEARD THAT YOU WERE KIND TO MY COMPATRIOT.

DOROTHEA.
THI-
THIS
IS
TOO
MUCH.
MURMUR
MURMUR
OH NO, PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!
I HEARD YOU BULLIED COROLE-COUTRE.
HE'S COROLE-COUTRE'S BROTHER.
SHOULD WE REALLY LET HIM HANDLE THIS?
PEOPLE LEARN TO FORGIVE WHEN THEY POSSESS THE POWER TO DETERMINE SOMEONE'S FATE.
BE MINDFUL OF YOUR ACTIONS FROM NOW ON.
BUT WE'RE GOING TO LET YOU LIVE AND GIVE YOU MONEY. WE'RE DOING THIS FOR JUSTICE.

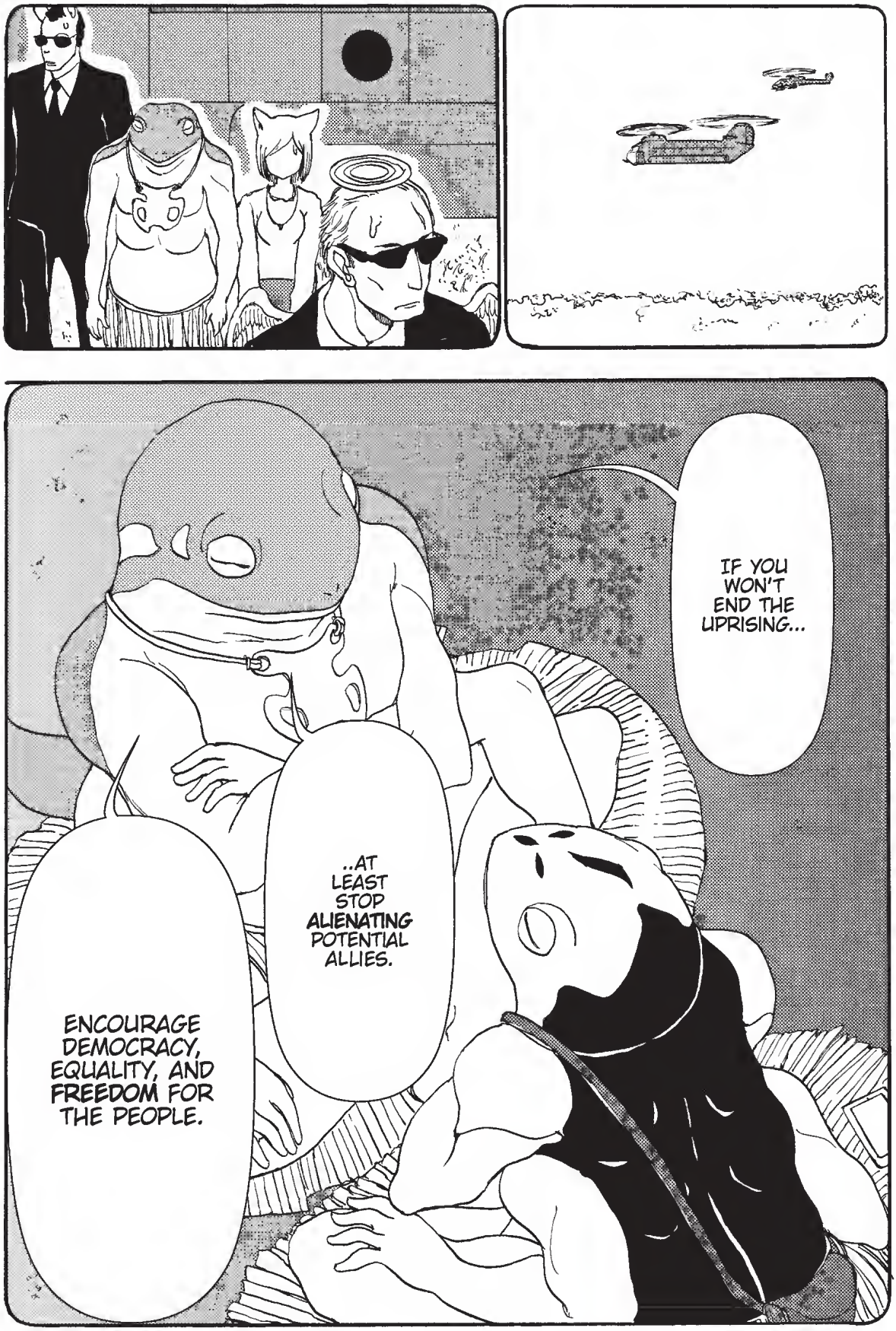

WeMovieb
Divine Soldiers will be Rescued!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO *STAND UP* FOR OUR-SELVES!
WHY CAN'T DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, FREEDOM, AND HUMAN RIGHTS APPLY TO *US*?!



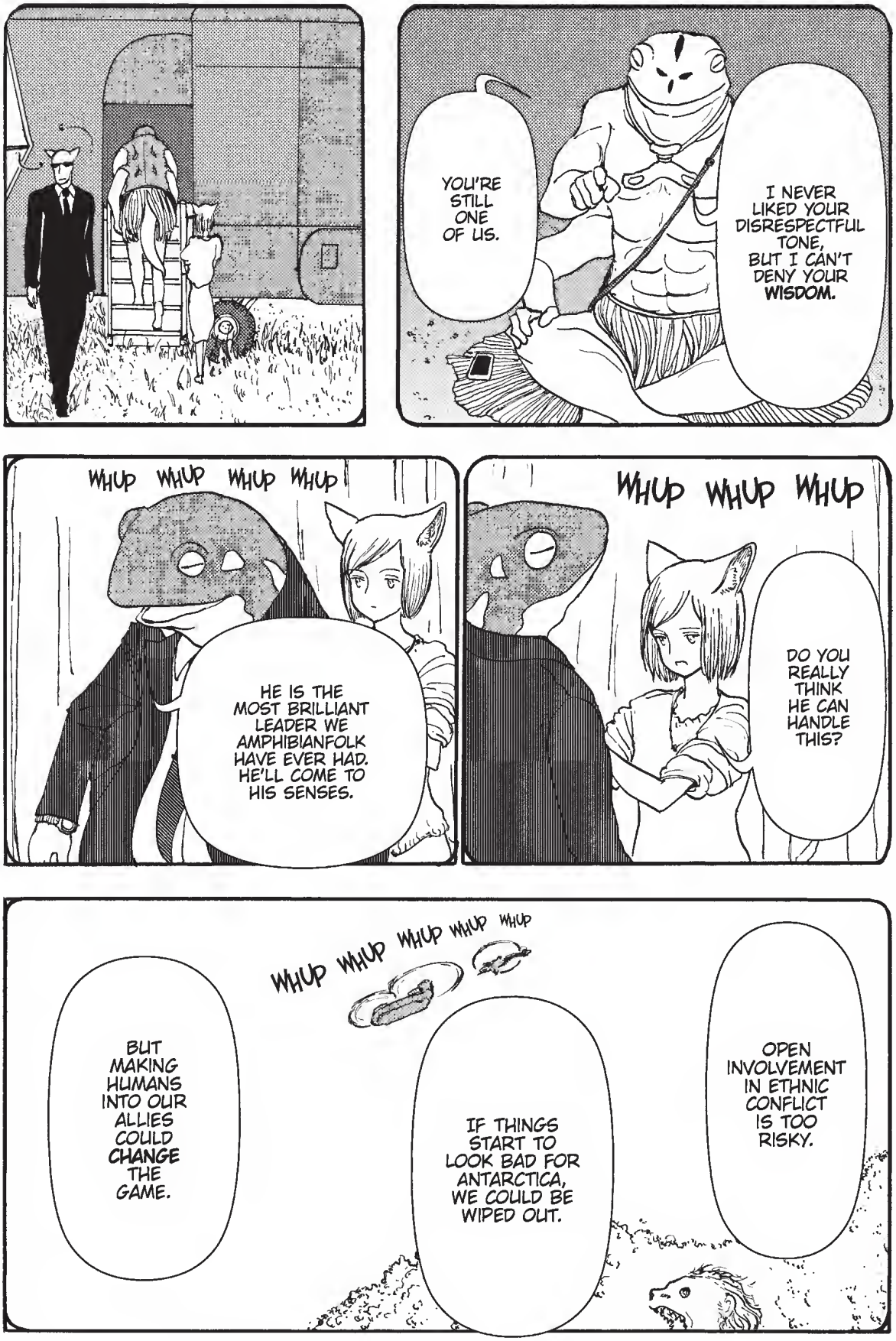

THUD
THUD

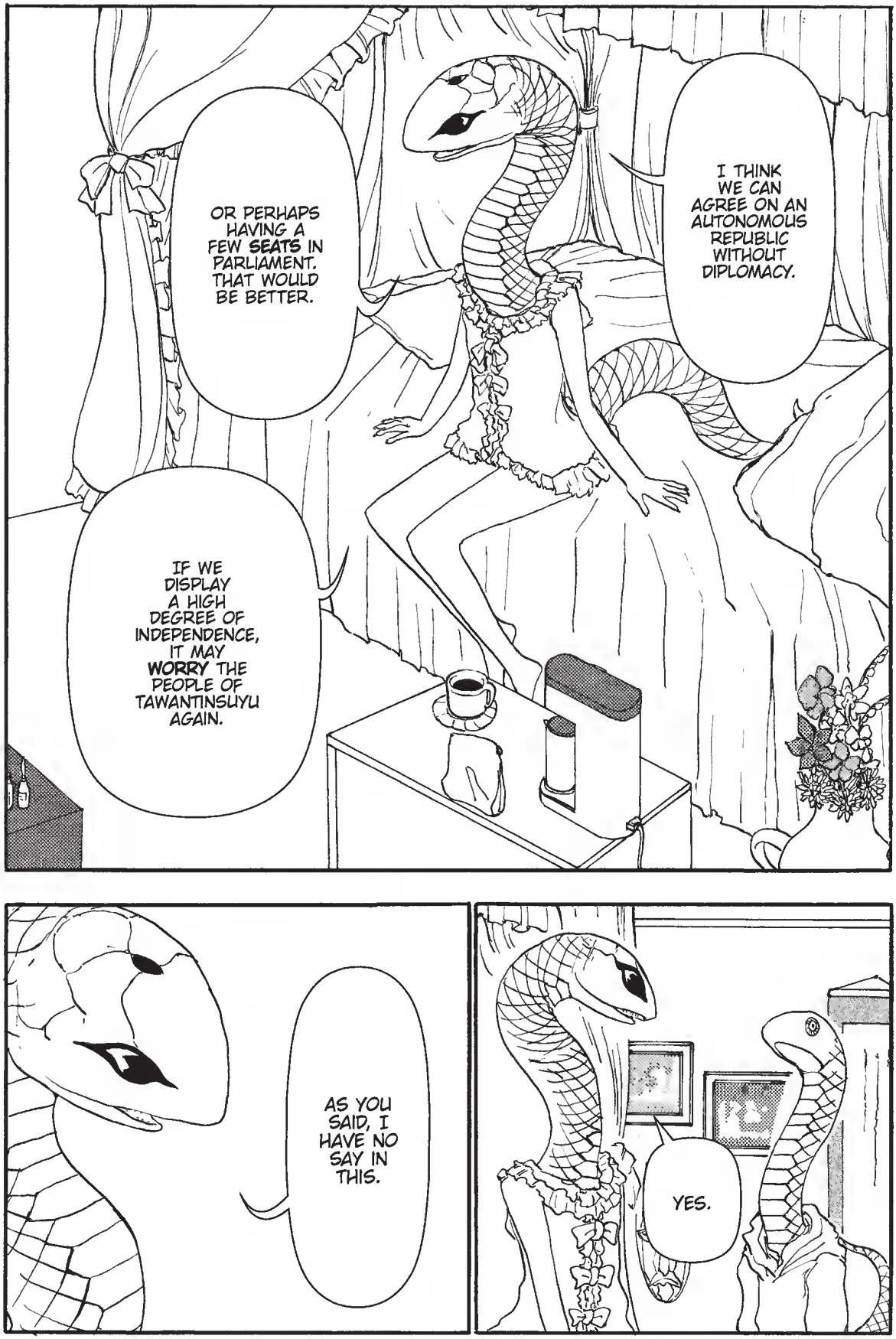

CROAK
CROAK
CROAK
CROAK

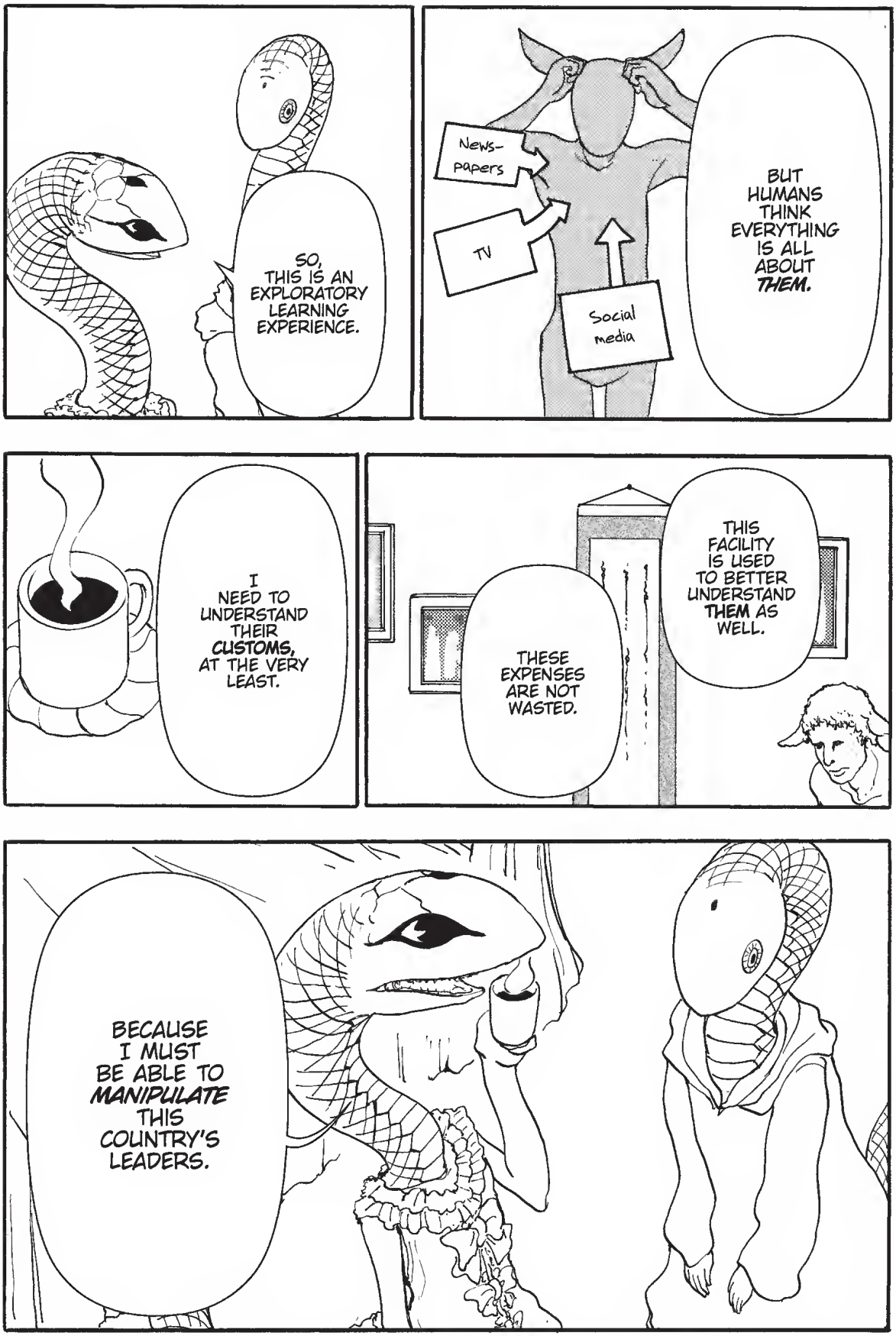
THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENT ON "EXTERMINATING FROGS IN GRASS SKIRTS" HAS BEEN LEAKED ONLINE.
THK NEWS
AS THE AMPHIBIAN-FOLK CONTINUE TO OCCUPY THE UPSTREAM REGION OF RIVER A...
TAWANTINSUYU INSISTS ACCUSATIONS THAT THEY MASTERMINDED THE COUP ARE GROUNDLESS.
THE PRESIDENT IS BEING FORCED TO RESIGN IN THE WAKE OF WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION FROM OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.
THE WORLD KEEPS GETTING MORE DANGER-OUS.
...I CAN PUT BOTH MY KIDS THROUGH COLLEGE WITHOUT LOANS.
IF I CAN MAKE IT BIG AGAIN...
HMM. DOESN'T KYOKO HAVE AN ANTARCTICAN CLASSMATE?
THERE'S BEEN ANTARCTICAN INFLUENCE IN THAT AREA FOR CENTURIES.


IF YOU WON'T END THE UPRISING...
..AT LEAST STOP ALIENATING POTENTIAL ALLIES.
ENCOURAGE DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, AND FREEDOM FOR THE PEOPLE.

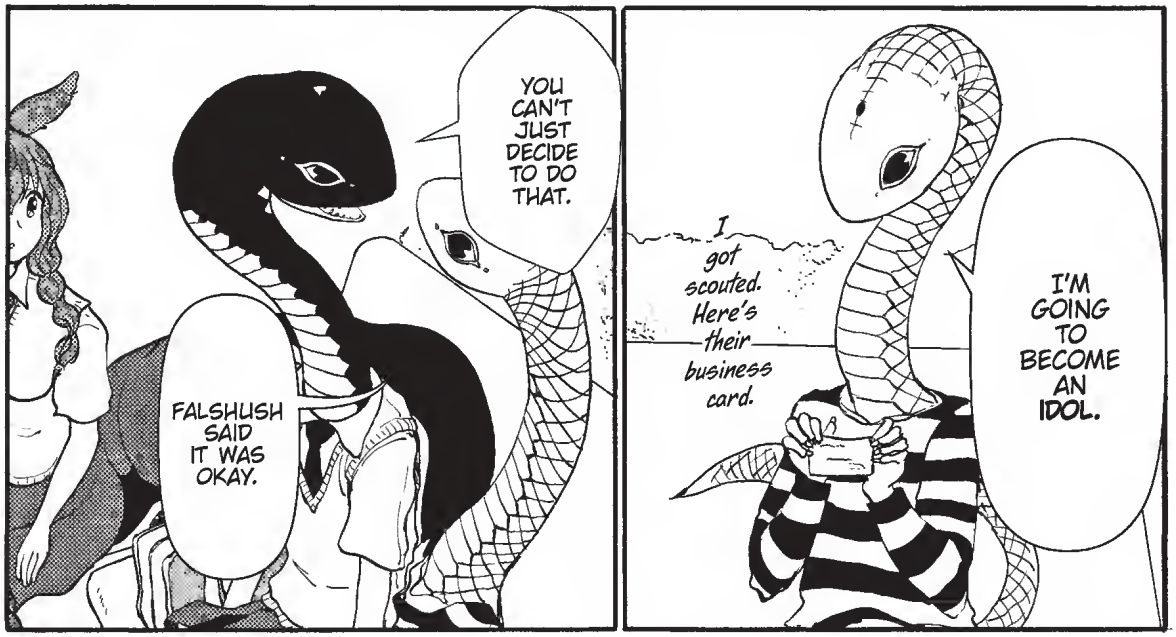
REMEMBER HOW YOU OUSTED THE ELDER TO BECOME THE LEADER?
YOU'RE WRONG. THIS IS THE RIGHT STRATEGY.
THOSE APES HAVE POISONED YOUR MIND.
HMM.
IF THERE ARE ANY OPPONENTS YOU CAN'T BEAT, DRAW THEM IN INSTEAD. OFFER WEALTH, PRIVILEGES, ANYTHING THEY WANT. PUT THEM IN HIGH POSITIONS, AND THEN GRADUALLY TAKE AWAY THEIR POWER.
DON'T TURN EVERYONE AGAINST YOU ALL AT ONCE.
COMPROMISE WITH SOME OF THEM, THEN POLARIZE THEM. DIVIDE AND CONQUER.
THE TIME IS NOT RIGHT FOR THEM TO MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN.
AND ANOTHER THING: YOU CAN'T DEPEND ON THE GODS FOR HELP.


YOU'RE STILL ONE OF US.
I NEVER LIKED YOUR DISRESPECTFUL TONE, BUT I CAN'T DENY YOUR WISDOM.
WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP
HE IS THE MOST BRILLIANT LEADER WE AMPHIBIANFOLK HAVE EVER HAD. HE'LL COME TO HIS SENSES.
WHUP WHUP WHUP
DO YOU REALLY THINK HE CAN HANDLE THIS?
BUT MAKING HUMANS INTO OUR ALLIES COULD CHANGE THE GAME.
WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP
IF THINGS START TO LOOK BAD FOR ANTARCTICA, WE COULD BE WIPED OUT.
OPEN INVOLVEMENT IN ETHNIC CONFLICT IS TOO RISKY.


I THINK WE CAN AGREE ON AN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC WITHOUT DIPLOMACY.
OR PERHAPS HAVING A FEW SEATS IN PARLIAMENT. THAT WOULD BE BETTER.
IF WE DISPLAY A HIGH DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE, IT MAY WORRY THE PEOPLE OF TAWANTINSUYU AGAIN.
YES.
AS YOU SAID, I HAVE NO SAY IN THIS.


SO, THIS IS AN EXPLORATORY LEARNING EXPERIENCE.
News-papers
TV
Social media
BUT HUMANS THINK EVERYTHING IS ALL ABOUT THEM.
I NEED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR CUSTOMS, AT THE VERY LEAST.
THESE EXPENSES ARE NOT WASTED.
THIS FACILITY IS USED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEM AS WELL.
BECAUSE I MUST BE ABLE TO MANIPULATE THIS COUNTRY'S LEADERS.

I DON'T HAVE ANY.
SO, NILNIS NILNEEF, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
BUT YOU CAN'T JUST WASTE TIME.
THAT'S WHY...
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MISSION? YOUR ORDERS?


YOU CAN'T JUST DECIDE TO DO THAT.
FALSHUSH SAID IT WAS OKAY.
I got scouted. Here's their business card.
I'M GOING TO BECOME AN IDOL.

A CentaUr's Life

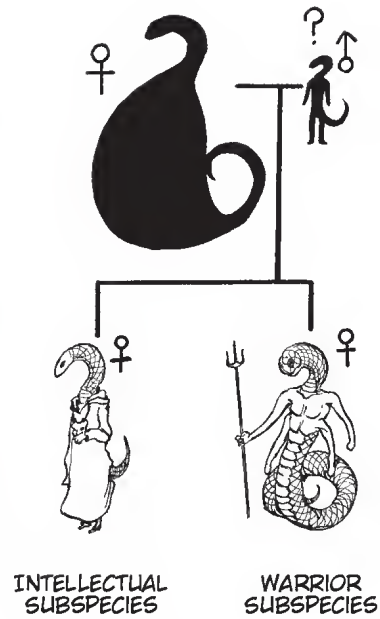
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 4

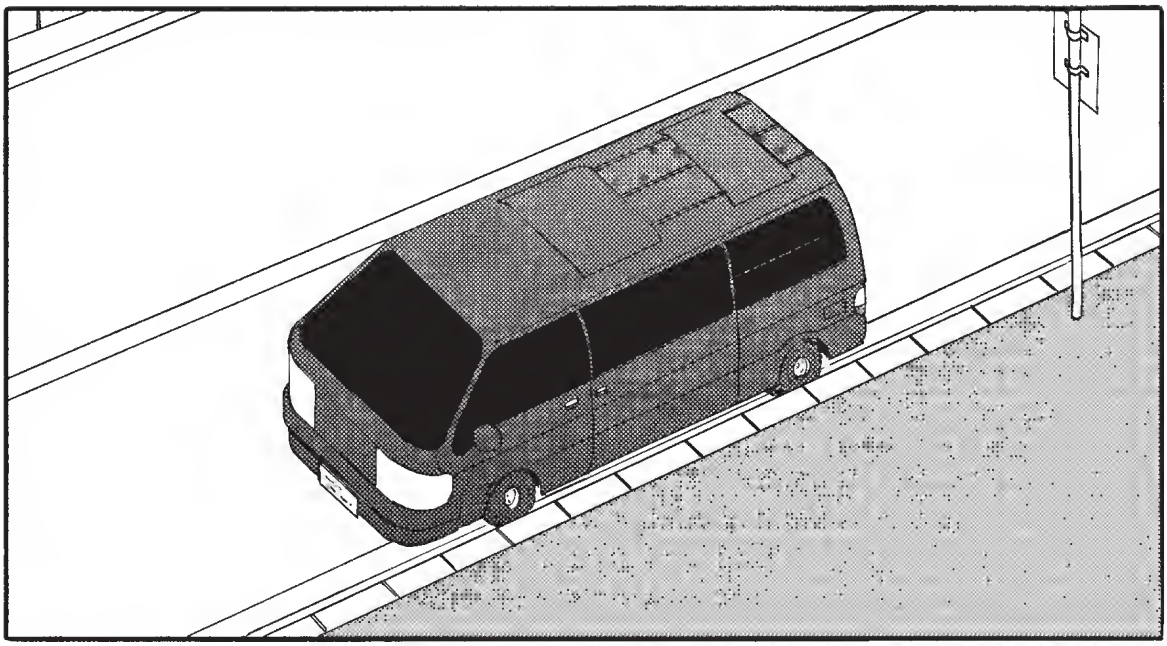
WE DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS OR AUTOPSY REPORTS FOR ANTARCTICANS, AND THIS COUPLED WITH THEIR SECRECY MEANS THAT WE DON'T HAVE MUCH SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR PHYSIOLOGY. WE CAN SPECULATE, HOWEVER, BASED ON THEIR OBSERVABLE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE SPOTTY INFORMATION WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO GLEAN FROM ANTARCTICANS THEMSELVES AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE INTERACTED WITH THEM.

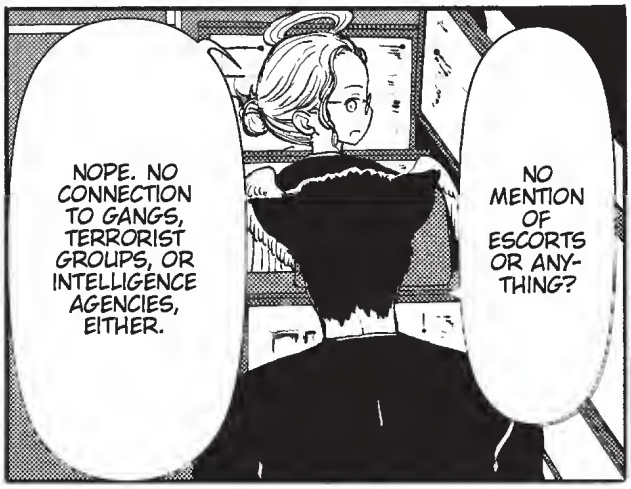
ANTARCTICANS WERE PREVIOUSLY CALLED "ANTARCTIC SNAKE PEOPLE," WHICH IS NOW CONSIDERED IMPOLITE. THEY WERE OFTEN CAST AS MONSTERS IN LOW-BUDGET HORROR MOVIES, BUT THAT KIND OF TYPECASTING LIKELY LED TO INCORRECT PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS.

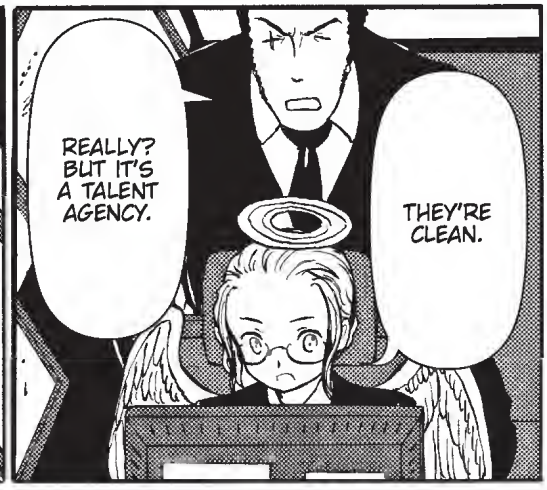
WE CURRENTLY CLASSIFY ANTARCTICANS INTO TWO SUBSPECIES KNOWN AS INTELLECTUAL AND WARRIOR. THE INTELLECTUAL SUBSPECIES IS GENERALLY PHYSICALLY SMALLER, HAS ONLY A SINGLE PAIR OF ARMS, AND IS BIPEDAL WITH A TAIL. THE WARRIOR SUBSPECIES IS GENERALLY LARGER AND MORE MUSCULAR, HAS TWO PAIRS OF ARMS, AND THE ENTIRE LOWER BODY RESEMBLES THAT OF A SNAKE. DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE LOWER BODY, BOTH SUBSPECIES STAND AND MOVE UPRIGHT. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, ALL ANTARCTICANS ARE FEMALE AND ARE CONSIDERED CHILDREN OF THE "QUEEN." THIS KIND OF EUSOCIAL STRUCTURE HAS BEEN OBSERVED IN MAMMALS AND INSECTS (I.E. NAKED MOLE RATS, ANTS, BEES AND TERMITES), BUT NOT AMONG REPTILES–THOUGH, IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER ANTARCTICANS TRULY BELONG TO THAT GROUP. ALTHOUGH THEIR APPEARANCE STRONGLY IMPLIES RELATION TO DIAPSIDS, OTHER EVIDENCE MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT THEY SHARE THE COLD-BLOODED TRAIT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HIGH LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE THAT THEY EXHIBIT DEMANDS A STABLE TEMPERATURE IN THEIR BRAINS, AND THE WARMTH IN THEIR HANDSHAKES IS CLEARLY INDICATIVE OF A HOMEOTHERMIC NATURE. THERE IS A CONVINCING THEORY, HOWEVER, THAT DINOSAURS MAY HAVE BEEN HOMEOTHERMIC; THEIR DESCENDANTS, MODERN BIRDS, ARE CERTAINLY KNOWN TO BE HOMEOTHERMIC AS WELL. THE ANCESTOR OF THE ALLIGATOR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AN ACTIVE FOUR-CHAMBERED HOMEOTHERMIC QUADRUPED, WITH MODERN ALLIGATORS HAVING DIVERGED FROM THEIR ANCESTORS DUE TO A REVERSION TO AN AQUATIC HABITAT AND A PREDATORY NATURE.

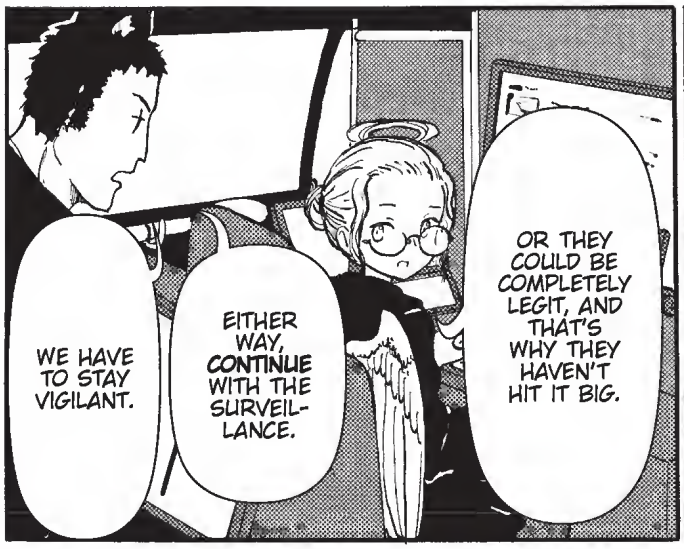
ALTHOUGH ANTARCTICANS ARE CALLED SNAKEFOLK, THEY CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED INTO THE GROUP OF SCALED REPTILES THAT MODERN SNAKES AND LIZARDS BELONG TO. WE BELIEVE THAT THEY INSTEAD BELONG TO THE ARCHOSAUR FAMILY, WHICH INCLUDES ALLIGATORS, DINOSAURS, AND SIMILAR CREATURES. HOWEVER, THEIR PHYSICAL STRUCTURE IS NOT DEMONSTRATIVE OF THEIR RELATION TO DINOSAURS.





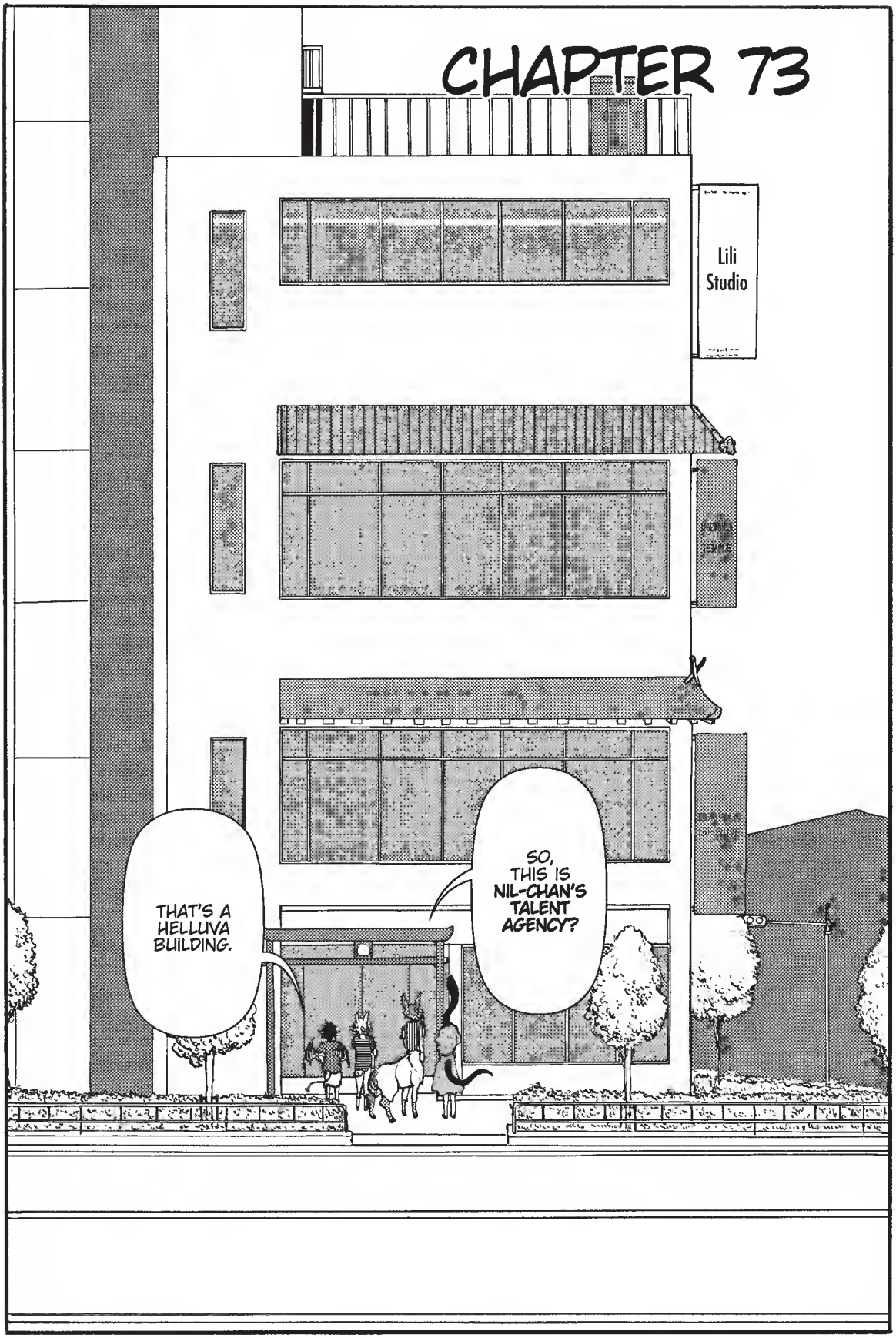

NOPE. NO CONNECTION TO GANGS, TERRORIST GROUPS, OR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, EITHER.
NO MENTION OF ESCORTS OR ANY-THING?


REALLY? BUT IT'S A TALENT AGENCY.
THEY'RE CLEAN.


WE HAVE TO STAY VIGILANT.
EITHER WAY, CONTINUE WITH THE SURVEIL-LANCE.
OR THEY COULD BE COMPLETELY LEGIT, AND THAT'S WHY THEY HAVEN'T HIT IT BIG.

MAYBE THE INFO WAS FAKED?
HMM... TOO CLEAN. SOUNDS FISHY.

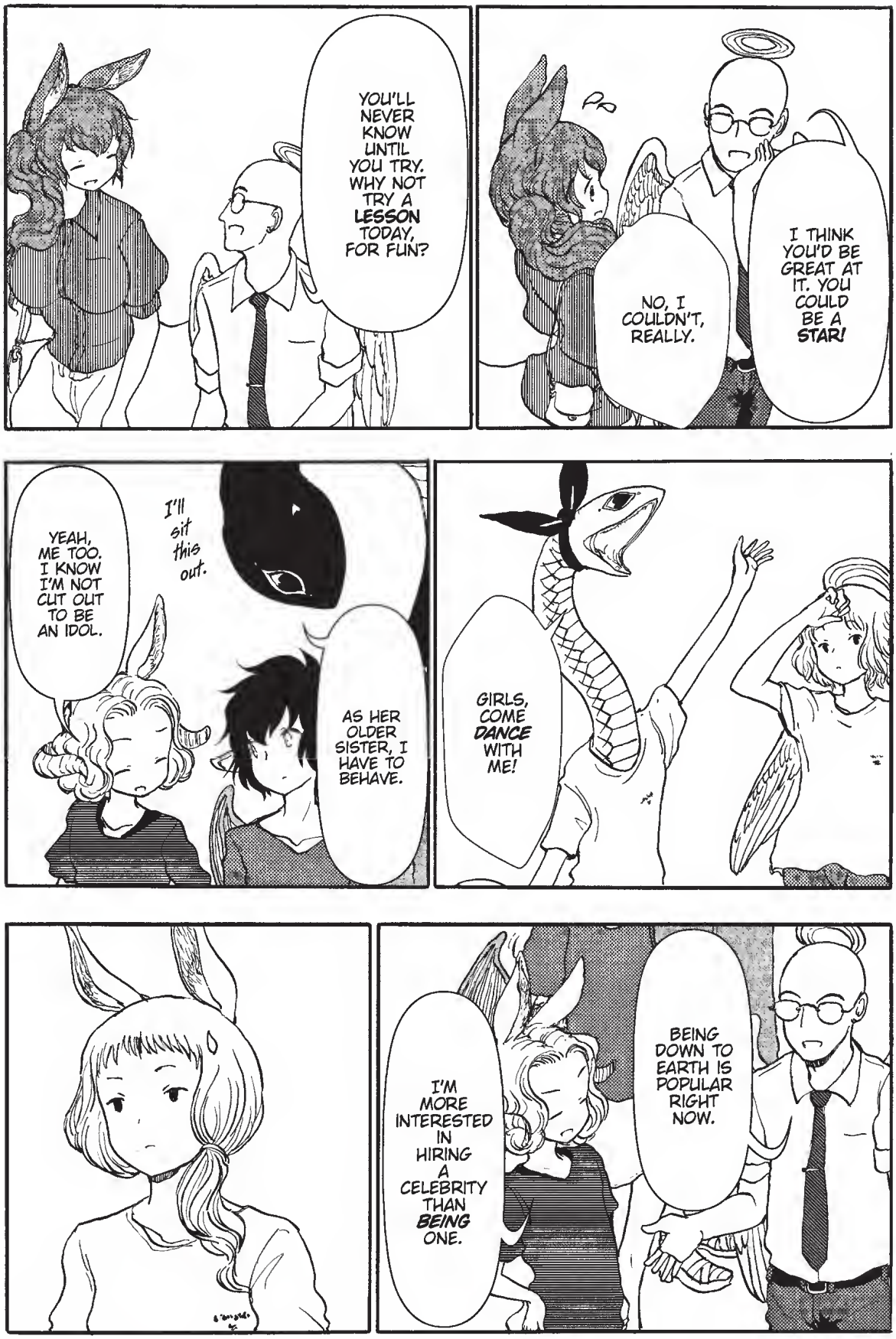
CHAPTER 73

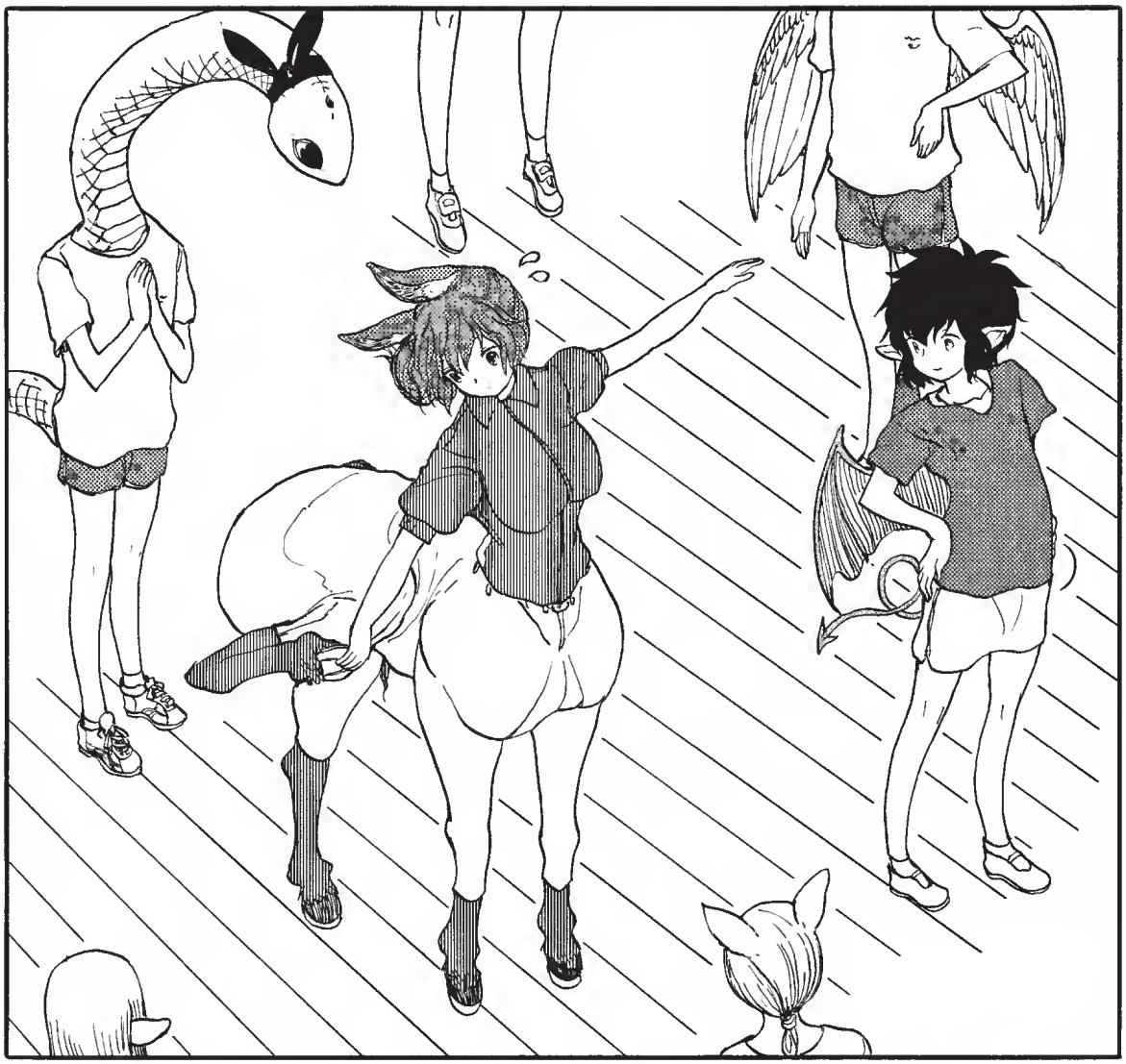

Lili Studio
THAT'S A HELLUVA BUILDING.
SO, THIS IS NIL-CHAN'S TALENT AGENCY?

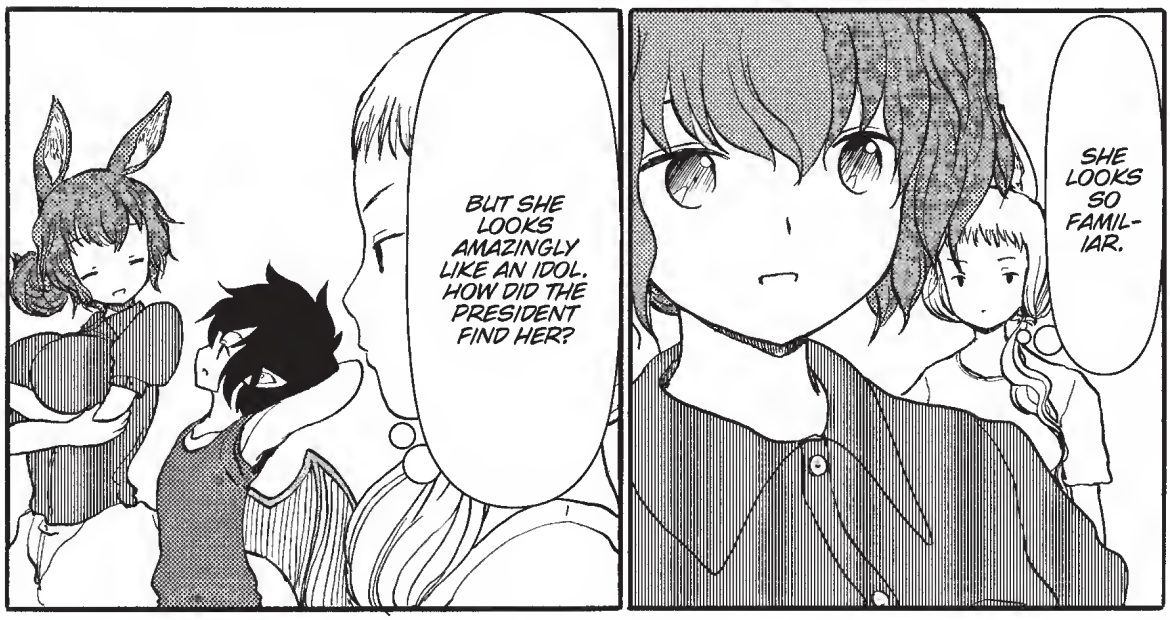
POKE
HELLO!
Please use intercom for entry.
PLEASE COME ON UP~!
FLIP FLAP
I'm so sorry. She just won't listen.
HUG
GUH!!
I KEEP TELLING YOU, HUGGING IS NOT PART OF THIS CULTURE!
GLOMP
OMG!! YOU CAME!!!
WHAM

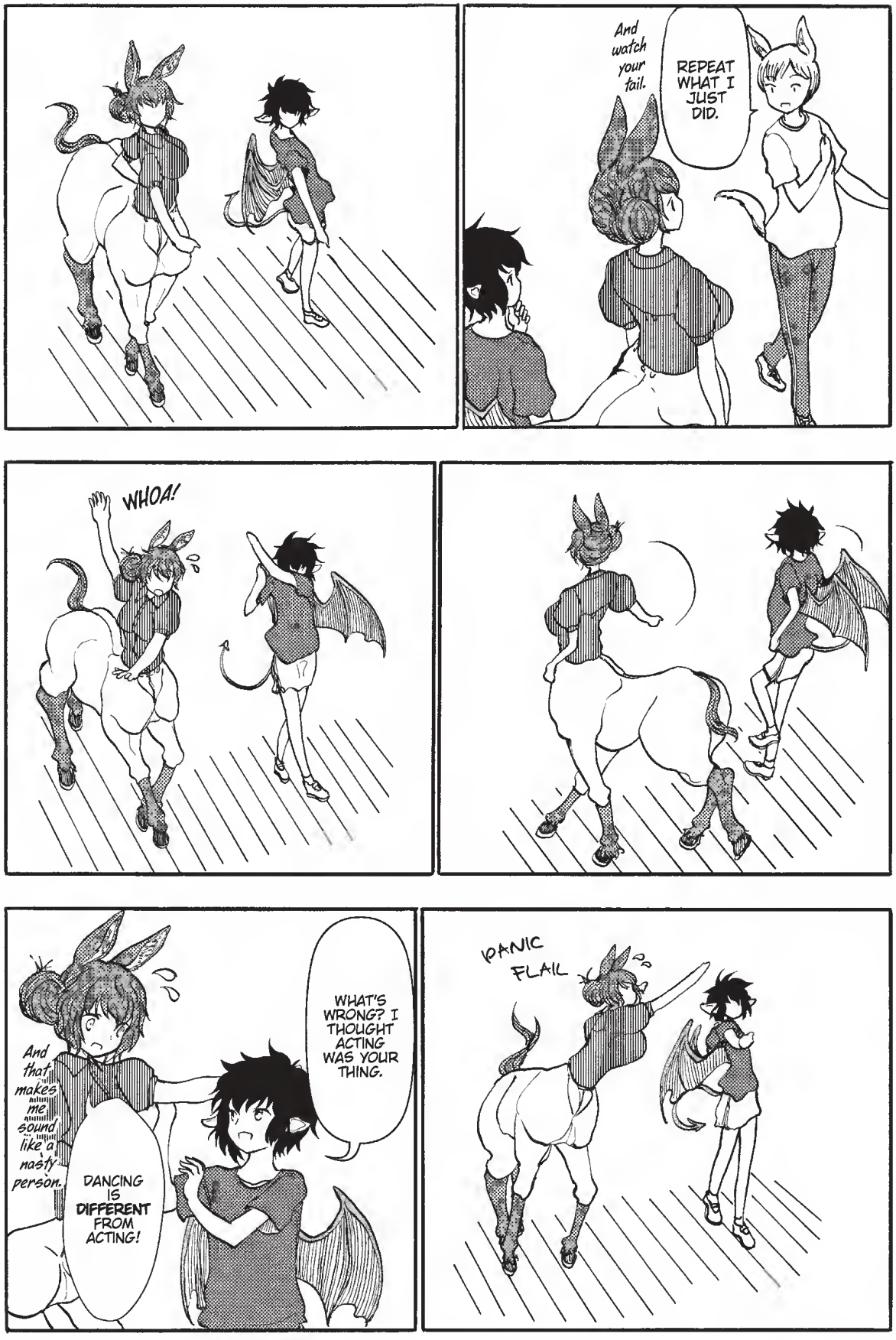
AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF MY PEOPLE, I THANK YOU FOR LOOKING AFTER MY SISTER.
OH, NO, YOU'RE EXAGGERATING.
It's my real name.
HI, I'M GONDOU LILI, THE PRESIDENT AND PRODUCER.
NIL... QUETZALCOATL-SAN IS DOING VERY WELL.
WE WERE SURPRISED BY HER TALENT FOR DANCING AND SINGING.
IS EVERYONE IN YOUR COUNTRY LIKE THAT?

DEAR ME, NO. EVEN THE CONCEPT OF CELEBRITY IS TOTALLY NEW TO US.
ALSO, WE ALL HAVE THE SAME LAST NAME, SO PLEASE CALL US BY OUR FIRST NAMES.
I SEE.
HOW WOULD THAT WORK?
WOBBLY~
EXCUSE ME, BUT ARE YOU A MODEL? I THINK I'VE SEEN YOU IN A MAGAZINE BEFORE.
OH, UH... NO, NOT ME!
HMM...
YOU MAY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES. DO YOU WANT TO BE FAMOUS?
UM, I'LL PASS. THANKS THOUGH!


YOU'LL NEVER KNOW UNTIL YOU TRY. WHY NOT TRY A LESSON TODAY, FOR FUN?
NO, I COULDN'T, REALLY.
I THINK YOU'D BE GREAT AT IT. YOU COULD BE A STAR!
YEAH, ME TOO. I KNOW I'M NOT CUT OUT TO BE AN IDOL.
I'll sit this out.
AS HER OLDER SISTER, I HAVE TO BEHAVE.
GIRLS, COME DANCE WITH ME!
I'M MORE INTERESTED IN HIRING A CELEBRITY THAN BEING ONE.
BEING DOWN TO EARTH IS POPULAR RIGHT NOW.




SHE LOOKS SO FAMIL-IAR.
BUT SHE LOOKS AMAZINGLY LIKE AN IDOL. HOW DID THE PRESIDENT FIND HER?


And watch your tail.
REPEAT WHAT I JUST DID.
WHOA!
PANIC
FLAIL
WHAT'S WRONG? I THOUGHT ACTING WAS YOUR THING.
And that makes me sound like a nasty person.
DANCING IS DIFFERENT FROM ACTING!

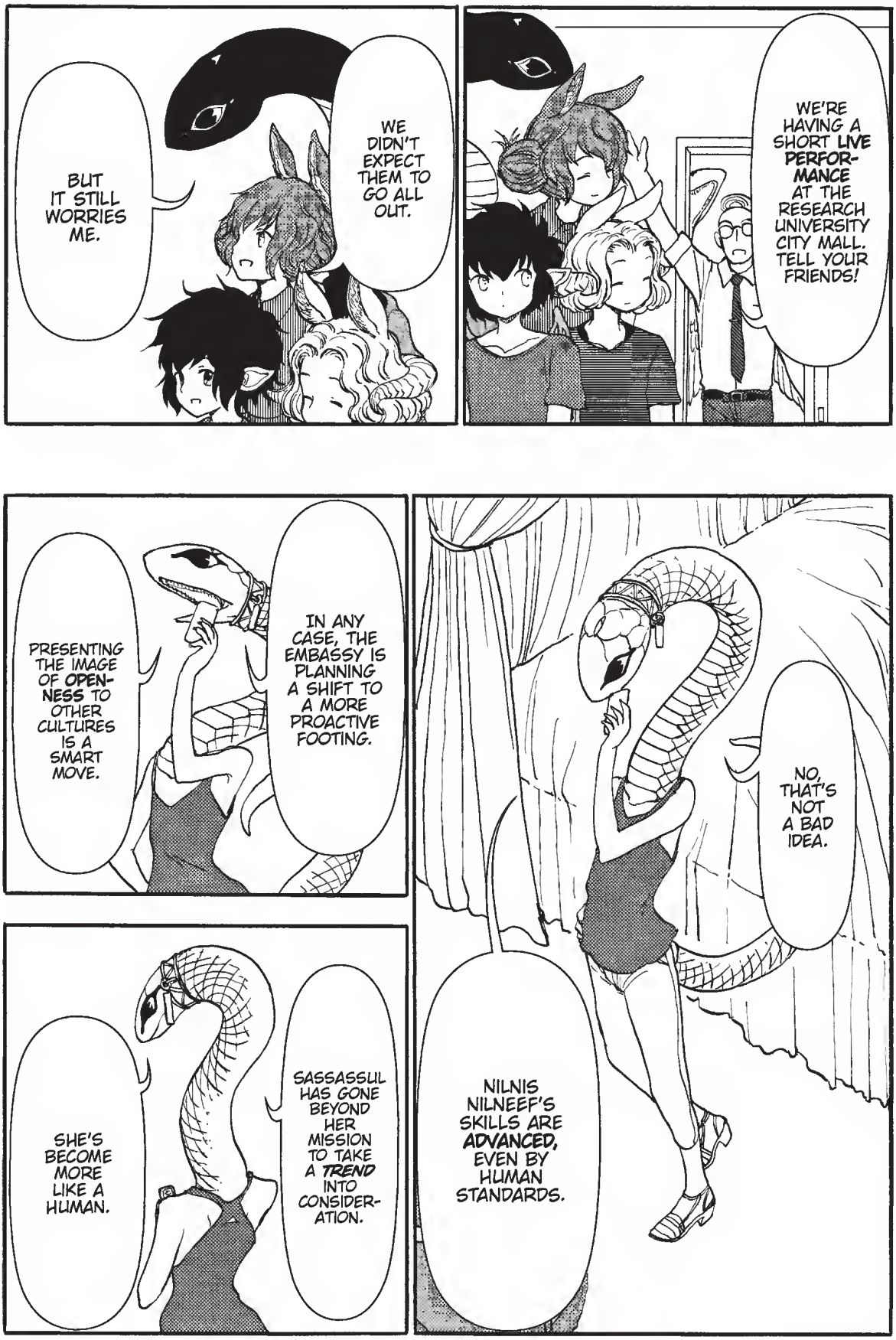
YOU'RE OFF BECAUSE YOU'RE TRYING TO MATCH WHAT THE PERSON IS DOING NEXT TO YOU.
I KNOW, BUT...
TRY DOING IT WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.
LIKE THIS.
SHE'S GOOD. I ONLY DID IT ONCE, AND SHE PICKED IT UP PERFECTLY.
SHE HAS GREAT BALANCE AND DEPTH PERCEPTION.
SHE ALSO HAS GOOD FLEXIBILITY. IS SHE TAKING BALLET?
WITH A NEW HAIRDO AND CUTE CLOTHES, SHE COULD BE A HIT!
I CAN READ HIS MIND.

IT'S OKAY. IT'LL COME NATURALLY TO YOU, IF YOU PRACTICE ENOUGH.
Wow!
But I can't do that.
TWIRL
← Voice Coach
↖ An Example
WHY DON'T YOU GIVE SINGING A SHOT, TOO?
TEE HEE!
HEY, YOU'RE GOOD!

YOUR TURN, NOZOMI-CHAN.
NOZOMI-CHAN, YOUR SINGING IS BAD.
SUE ME!
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S ON-KEY.
IT'S... NOT GOOD.
OH, ME NEXT?

THAT'S GREAT!
AND YOU'RE COMFORT-ABLE WITH AN AUDIENCE.
SHE'S GOOD AT THIS.
ALTHOUGH SHE HASN'T BEEN TRAINED.
IT'S SO RELAXING.
Yasss, praise me more!
IN THAT SENSE, YOU'RE AMAZING.
WE CAN NEVER BE IDOLS.
SO, NEITHER OF US IS GOOD AT BOTH DANCING AND SINGING.
IT'S HARD!
MAYBE NOT, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU LACK THE DESIRE.

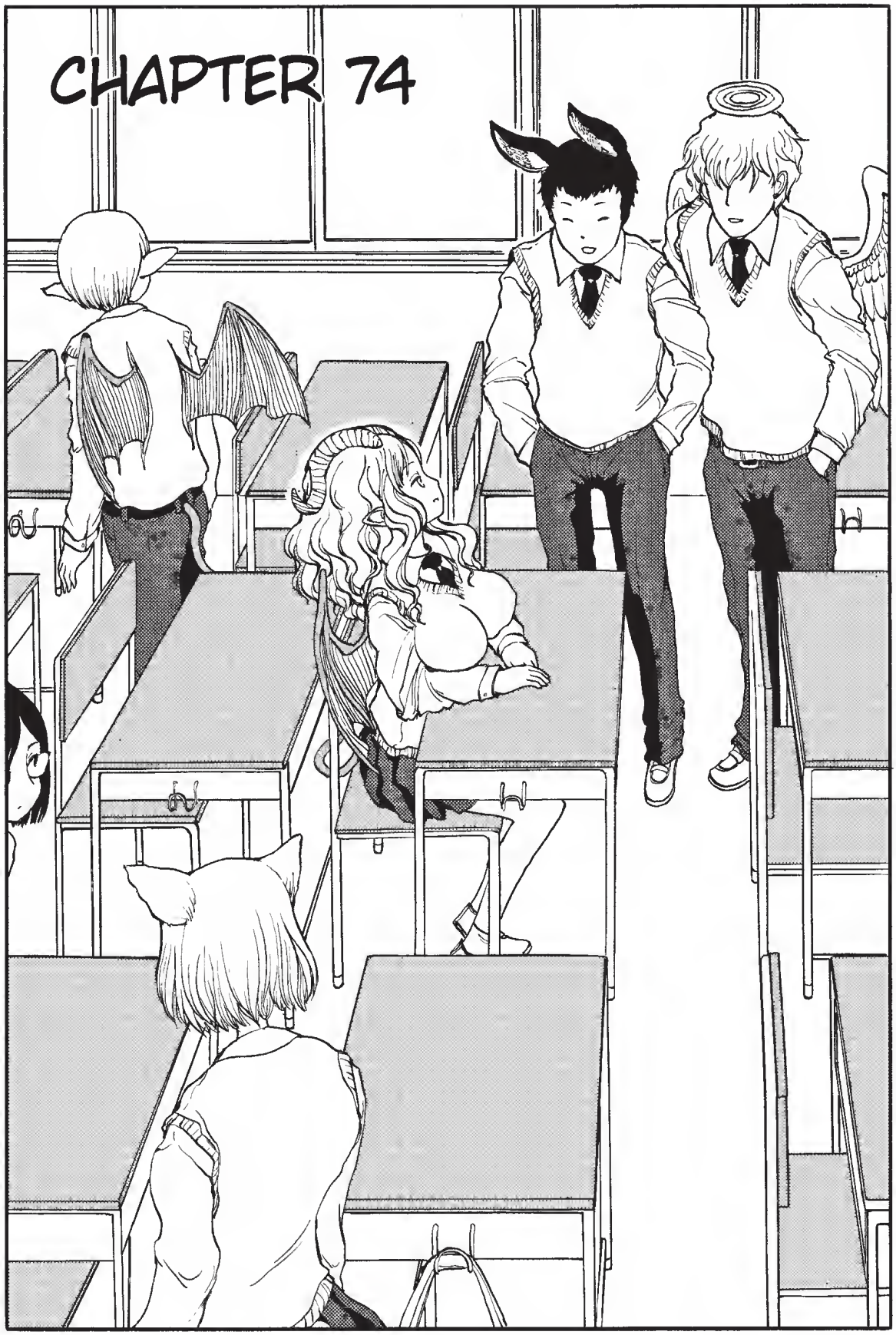
THERE'S THAT, BUT...
AND THERE'S **LIP-SYNC** THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE SINGING.
IT ONLY TAKES **PRACTICE** TO DANCE WELL.
WOW, SHE'S SINGING IN NOZOMI-CHAN'S VOICE, AND SHE'S GOOD!
THAT VOICE COACH IS IMPRESSIVE.
NOW WATCH HOW PEOPLE WITH DESIRE PERFORM.
DO YOU WANT TO BE AN IDOL, NIL-CHAN?
YES, I **REALLY** DO.


WE'RE HAVING A SHORT LIVE PERFOR-MANCE AT THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY CITY MALL. TELL YOUR FRIENDS!
WE DIDN'T EXPECT THEM TO GO ALL OUT.
BUT IT STILL WORRIES ME.
NO, THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA.
NILNIS NILNEEF'S SKILLS ARE ADVANCED, EVEN BY HUMAN STANDARDS.
IN ANY CASE, THE EMBASSY IS PLANNING A SHIFT TO A MORE PROACTIVE FOOTING.
PRESENTING THE IMAGE OF OPEN-NESS TO OTHER CULTURES IS A SMART MOVE.
SASSASSUL HAS GONE BEYOND HER MISSION TO TAKE A TREND INTO CONSIDER-ATION.
SHE'S BECOME MORE LIKE A HUMAN.

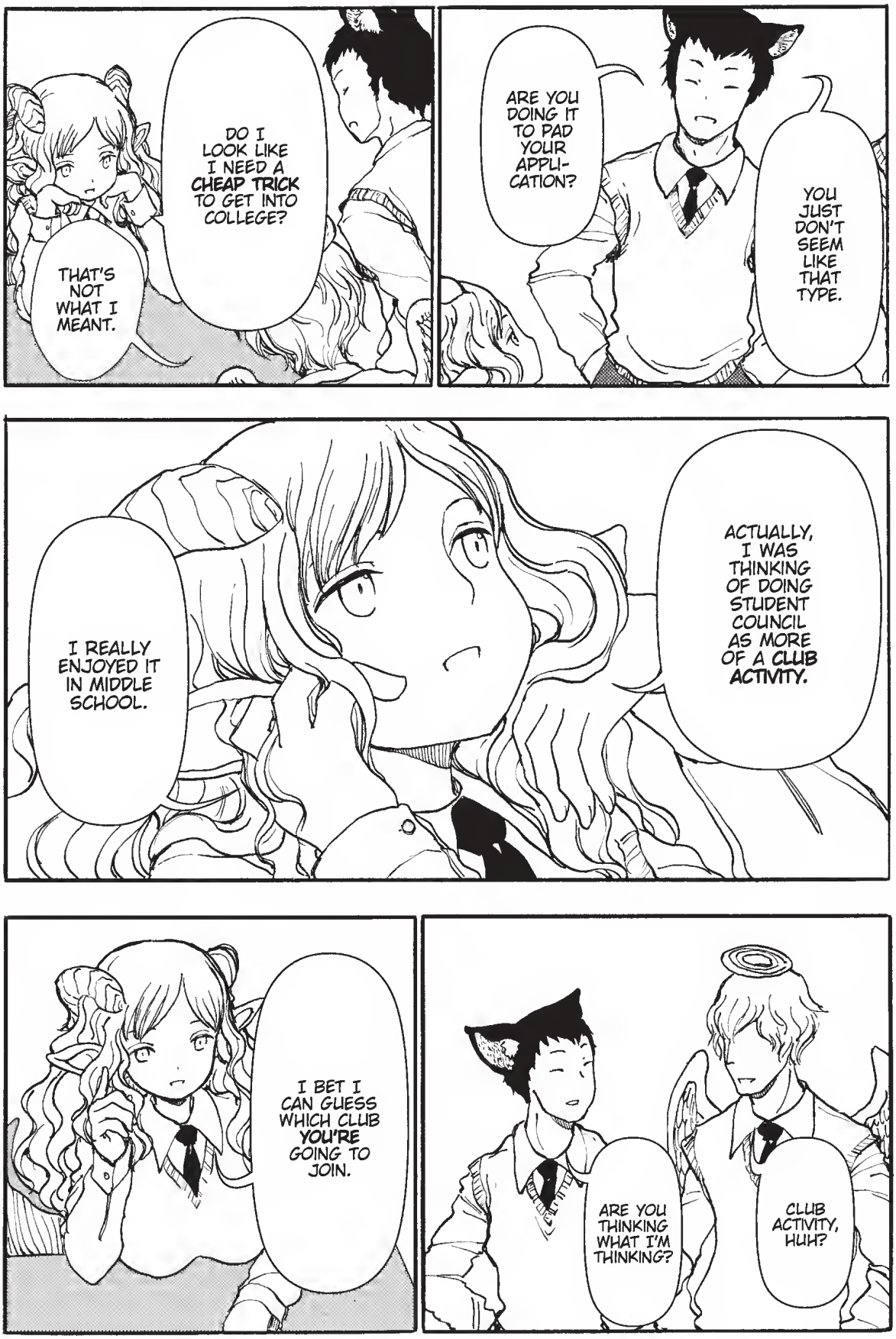
A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 5

THE ANTARCTICAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE SEEMS TO SHARE EUSOCIAL TRAITS WITH CREATURES LIKE ANTS AND BEES, SUCH AS THE COOPERATIVE REARING OF YOUNG AND WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN OVERWHELMINGLY FEMALE SOCIETY IN WHICH ONLY THE QUEEN REPRODUCES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT ANTARCTICANS DO SEEM TO HAVE A MUCH GREATER SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY THAN IS EXHIBITED BY OTHER EUSOCIAL CREATURES. THOUGH HUMANS MAY PERCEIVE THEIR SOCIETY AS RIGID AND TOTALITARIAN, WE CANNOT DENY THAT MEMBERS OF THE INTELLECTUAL SUBSPECIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY THINK AS INDIVIDUALS AND OPERATE AT THEIR OWN DISCRETION, EVEN GOING SO FAR AS TO SHOW EMOTION, ALBEIT INFREQUENTLY. (OF COURSE, ANTS AND BEES MAY ALSO HAVE THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL MINDS OR EMOTIONS, BUT WE HAVE NO WAY TO KNOW.) GIVEN THAT ALL ANTARCTICANS THAT INTERACT WITH HUMANS ARE IN DIPLOMATIC ROLES, WE CAN ASSUME THAT THEY ARE PURSUING A UNIFIED PURPOSE FOR THEIR GOVERNMENT; IT'S POSSIBLE THAT WE PERCEIVE THEM AS TOTALITARIAN BECAUSE WE ONLY SEE ONE FACET OF THEIR CIVILIZATION. THEY COULD BE JUST AS INDIVIDUALISTIC AS HUMANS.

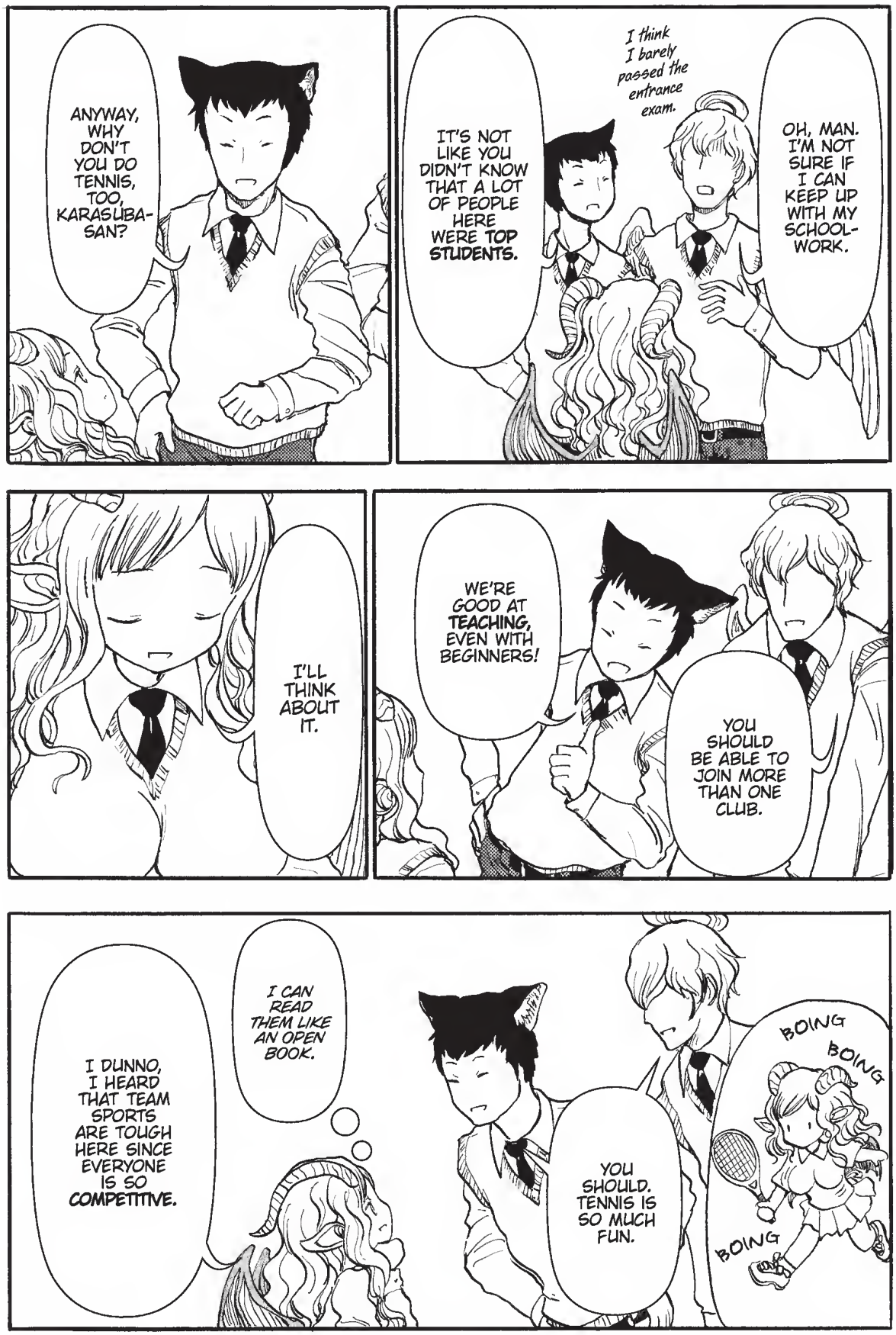

CHAPTER 74

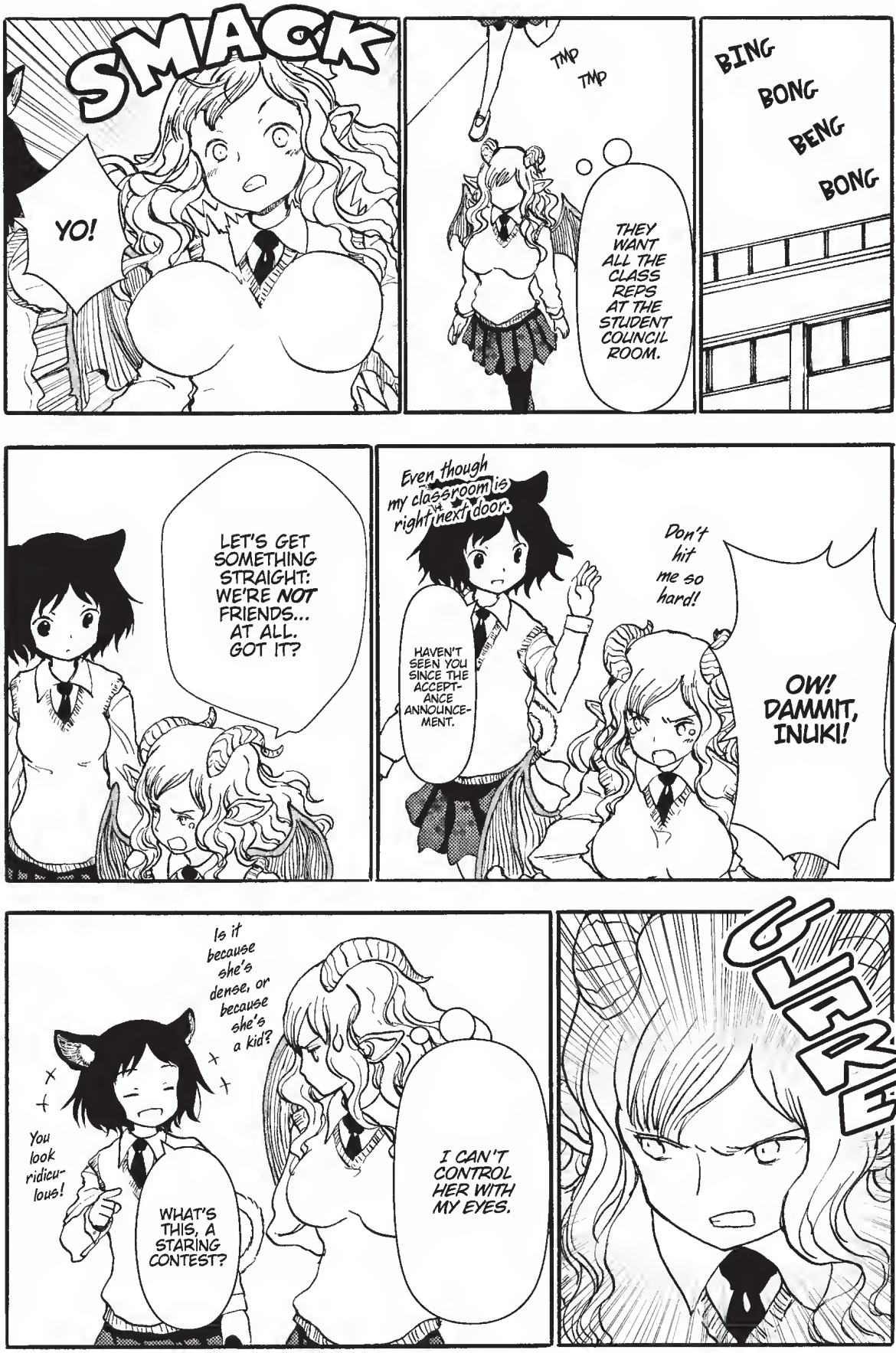
WHY'D YOU VOLUNTEER TO BE CLASS REP, KARASUBA-SAN?
OH! UHH, WELL...
CAN I HELP YOU WITH SOME-THING?
WHAT, IS THAT WEIRD?
NO, BUT PEOPLE WHO DO THAT ARE USUALLY REALLY FULL OF THEMSELVES.

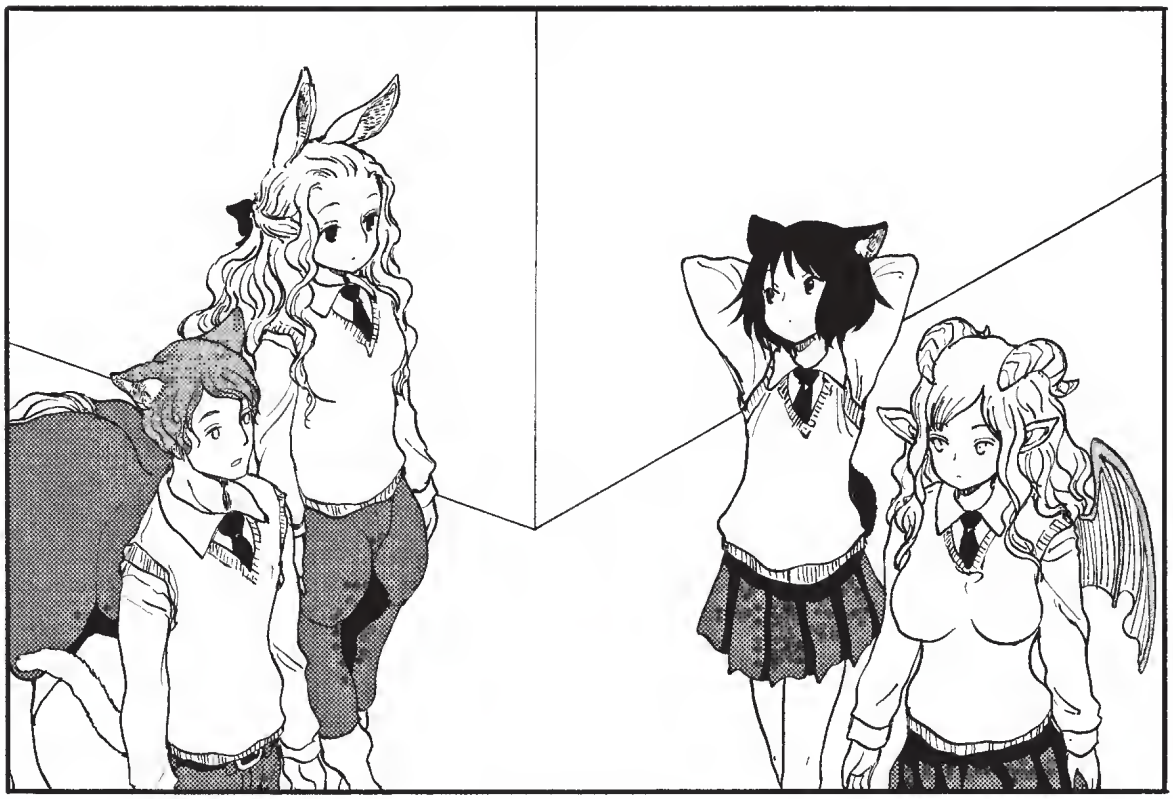

DO I LOOK LIKE I NEED A CHEAP TRICK TO GET INTO COLLEGE?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
ARE YOU DOING IT TO PAD YOUR APPLI-CATION?
YOU JUST DON'T SEEM LIKE THAT TYPE.
ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING OF DOING STUDENT COUNCIL AS MORE OF A CLUB ACTIVITY.
I REALLY ENJOYED IT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
I BET I CAN GUESS WHICH CLUB YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN.
ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?
CLUB ACTIVITY, HUH?

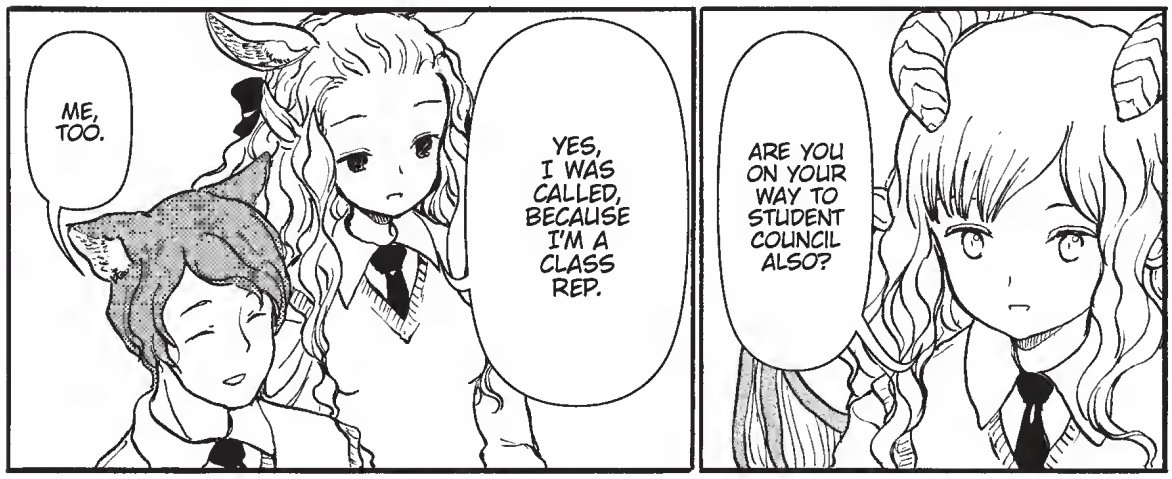
WHAT GAVE IT AWAY?
HOW'D YOU GUESS...?
TENNIS TEAM. AM I RIGHT?
OH, YEAH? LET'S HEAR IT.
OH, AND LAST YEAR, YOU MADE IT TO DOUBLES QUARTER-FINALS IN PREFECTURAL COMPETITION.
HOW'S THAT?
YOU HAVE A SUNTAN AND A BODY OF AN ATHLETE.
I SEE CALLUSES ON YOUR HANDS.
BUT YOU USED TO DO A NON-CONTACT SPORT. THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS TELLS ME IT WAS A BALL GAME.
PIECING THOSE CLUES TOGETHER GIVES ME TENNIS PLAYER.
YOU DIDN'T START OFF BALD WHEN YOU GREW YOUR HAIR.
YOU'RE SO DEAD-ON THAT YOU'RE FREAKING ME OUT.
WAIT, IS YOUR REAL NAME SHERLOCK? THAT'S SCARY.

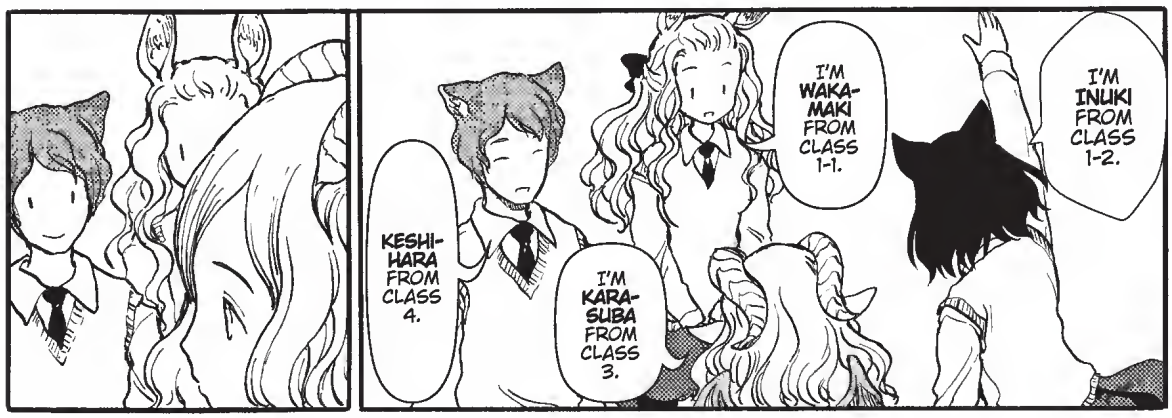
PFFT!
THIS SCHOOL IS IMPRESSIVE.
I KNEW THERE WERE A LOT OF SMART PEOPLE HERE, BUT **DAMN.**
YOU WERE IN THE INNER-CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPETITION, RIGHT?
I WAS ON THE STUDENT COUNCIL, SO I HELPED **MANAGE** THE EVENT.
WHAT?
YOU HAD US COMPLETELY FOOLED.
YOU DID SAY YOU WERE ON STUDENT COUNCIL IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
THERE WERE SOME **HINTS.**
I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOUR FACES, BUT I REMEMBERED YOUR NAMES AND YOUR SCHOOL.
THAT TOURNAMENT SELECTION WASN'T RANDOMLY DONE. I SET THEM UP BASED ON REGULAR SEASON GAME RESULTS.


ANYWAY, WHY DON'T YOU DO TENNIS, TOO, KARASUBA-SAN?
I think I barely passed the entrance exam.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE WERE TOP STUDENTS.
OH, MAN. I'M NOT SURE IF I CAN KEEP UP WITH MY SCHOOL-WORK.
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
WE'RE GOOD AT TEACHING, EVEN WITH BEGINNERS!
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO JOIN MORE THAN ONE CLUB.
I DUNNO, I HEARD THAT TEAM SPORTS ARE TOUGH HERE SINCE EVERYONE IS SO COMPETITIVE.
I CAN READ THEM LIKE AN OPEN BOOK.
YOU SHOULD. TENNIS IS SO MUCH FUN.
BOING
BOING
BOING

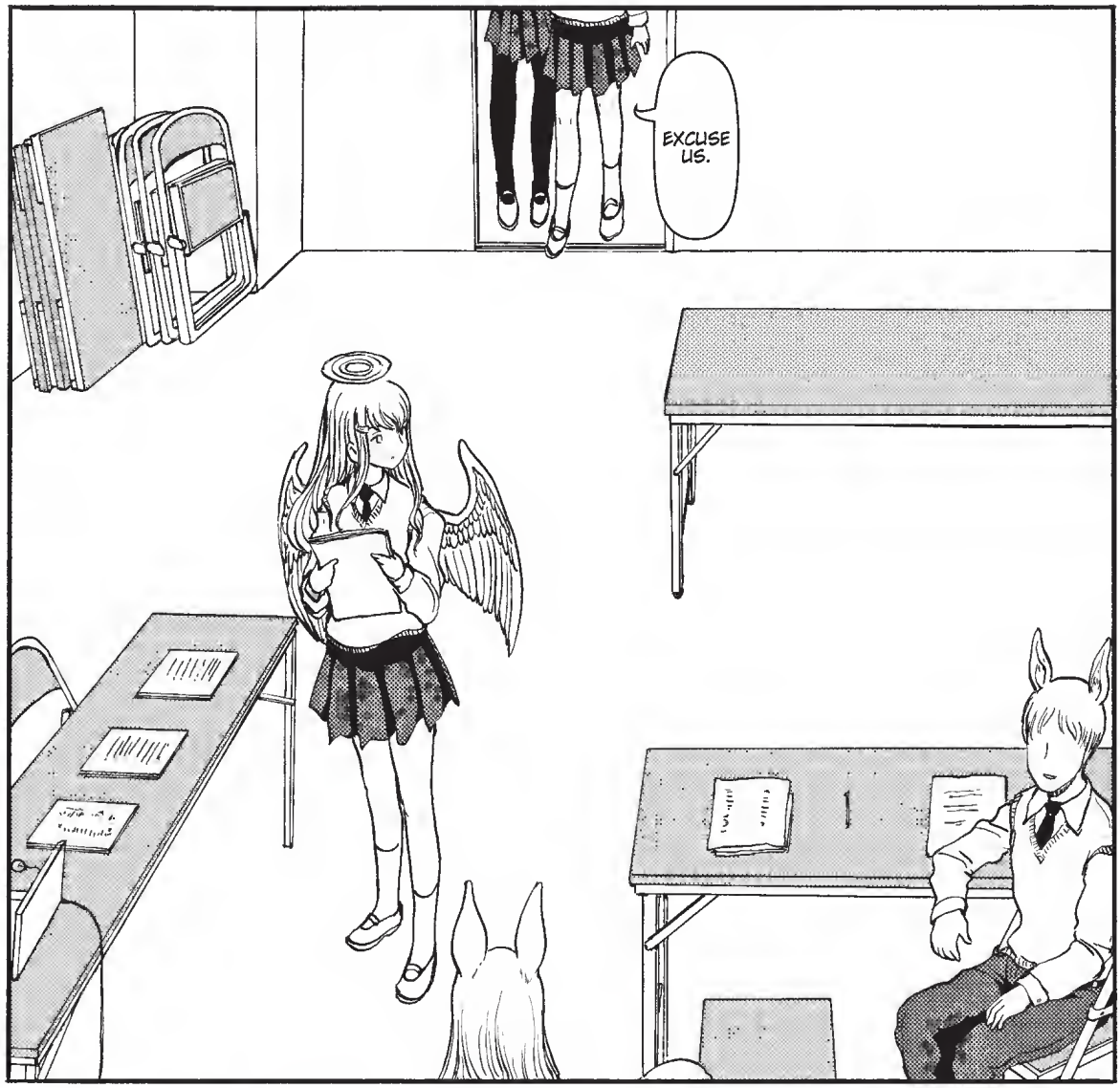

SMACK
YO!
TMP
TMP
THEY WANT ALL THE CLASS REPS AT THE STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM.
BING
BONG
BENG
BONG
LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT: WE'RE NOT FRIENDS... AT ALL. GOT IT?
Even though my classroom is right next door.
HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE THE ACCEPT-ANCE ANNOUNCE-MENT.
Don't hit me so hard!
OW! DAMMIT, INUKI!
Is it because she's dense, or because she's a kid?
You look ridicu-lous!
WHAT'S THIS, A STARING CONTEST?
I CAN'T CONTROL HER WITH MY EYES.
GLARE

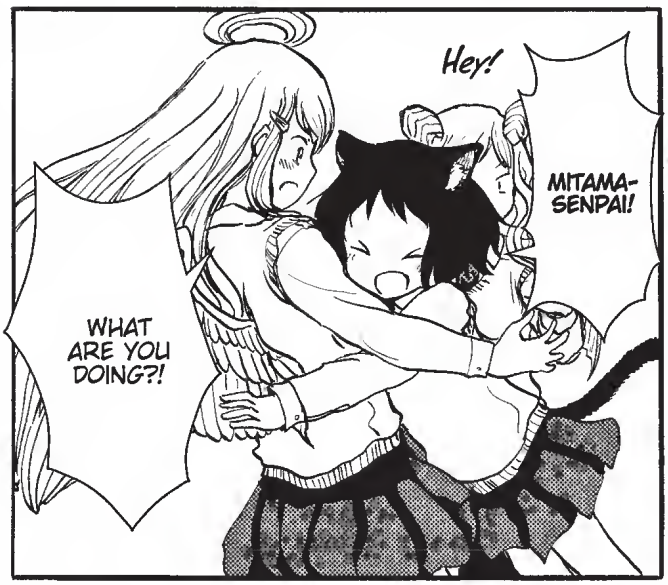


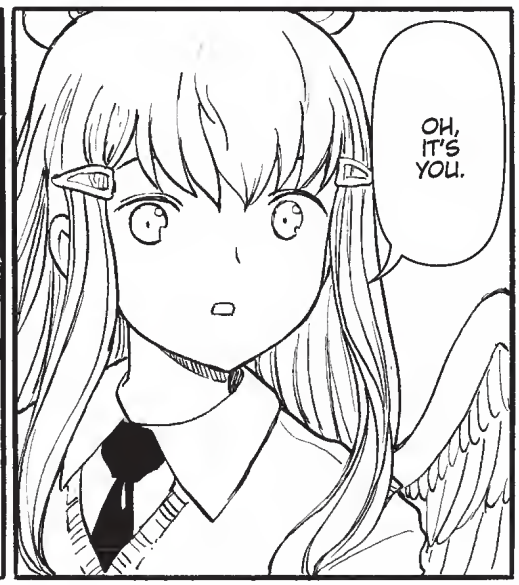

ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY TO STUDENT COUNCIL ALSO?
YES, I WAS CALLED, BECAUSE I'M A CLASS REP.
ME, TOO.


I'M INUKI FROM CLASS 1-2.
I'M WAKA-MAKI FROM CLASS 1-1.
I'M KARA-SUBA FROM CLASS 3.
KESHI-HARA FROM CLASS 4.

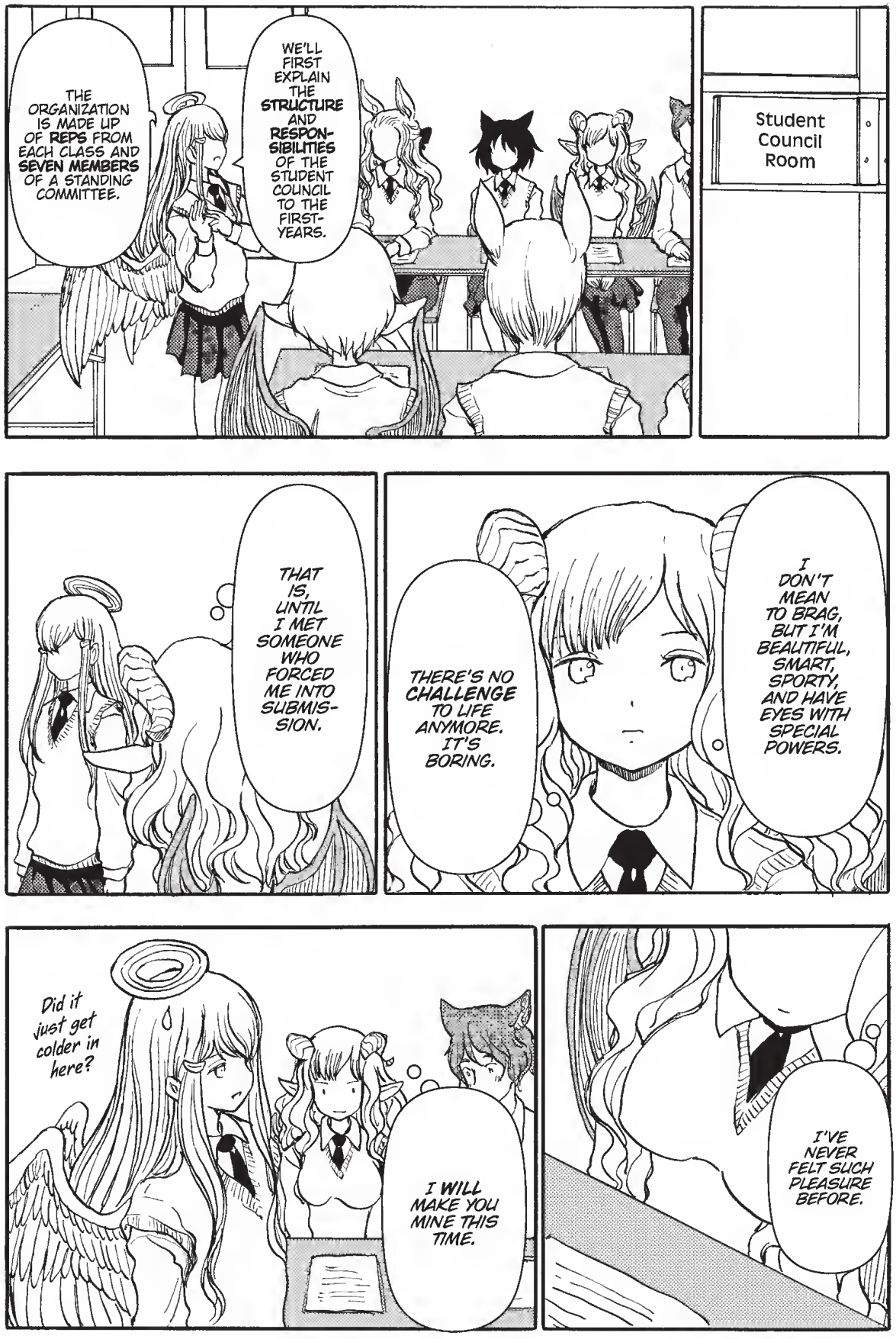
NICE TO MEET YOU!
NICE TO MEET YOU.
GRIN
UM... WHAT'S WRONG?
UH, NOTHING!
IT DOES WORK ON A NORMAL PERSON.
I'VE GOTTA RUN TO THE BATH-ROOM.
WHAT'S HIS DEAL? IS HE NERVOUS?
BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO WORK ON WOMEN. I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GAUGE MY SKILLS.
WE'LL GO AHEAD, THEN.


EXCUSE US.


Hey!
MITAMA-SENPAI!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!


OH, IT'S YOU.

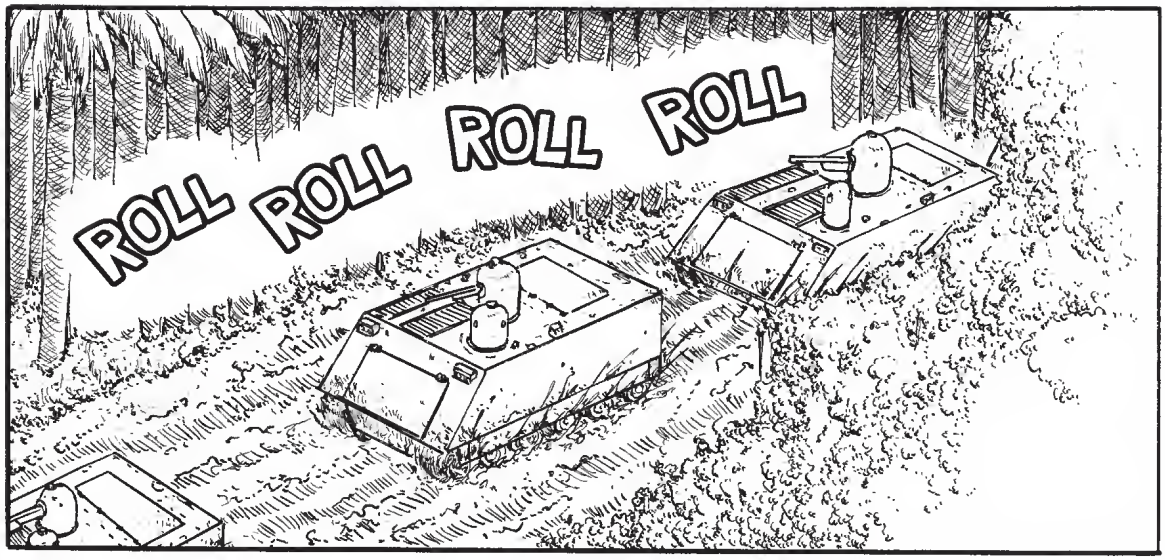
YES, I CAME TO THIS SCHOOL BECAUSE OF HER!
Wow.
ARE THEY YOUR KOUHAI?
You're not kids anymore!
THAT'S PROMISING.
ME, TOO!
Let go of me!
I'LL PUT MY HEART AND SOUL INTO THIS JOB!
UN-BELIEV-ABLE...
THESE ARE HIGH SCHOOL-ERS?
You two, go sit down.
IT'S OKAY. A FEW THIRD-YEARS ARE RUNNING LATE, TOO. GIVE THEM A FEW MINUTES.
SORRY I'M LATE.


Student Council Room
WE'LL FIRST EXPLAIN THE STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL TO THE FIRST-YEARS.
THE ORGANIZATION IS MADE UP OF REPS FROM EACH CLASS AND SEVEN MEMBERS OF A STANDING COMMITTEE.
I DON'T MEAN TO BRAG, BUT I'M BEAUTIFUL, SMART, SPORTY, AND HAVE EYES WITH SPECIAL POWERS.
THERE'S NO CHALLENGE TO LIFE ANYMORE. IT'S BORING.
THAT IS, UNTIL I MET SOMEONE WHO FORCED ME INTO SUBMISSION.
I'VE NEVER FELT SUCH PLEASURE BEFORE.
I WILL MAKE YOU MINE THIS TIME.
Did it just get colder in here?

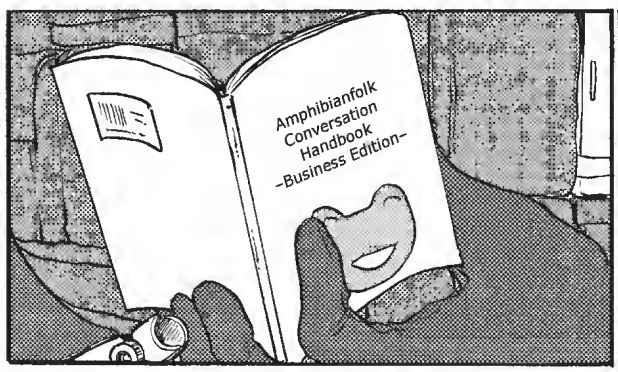
A CentaUr's Life

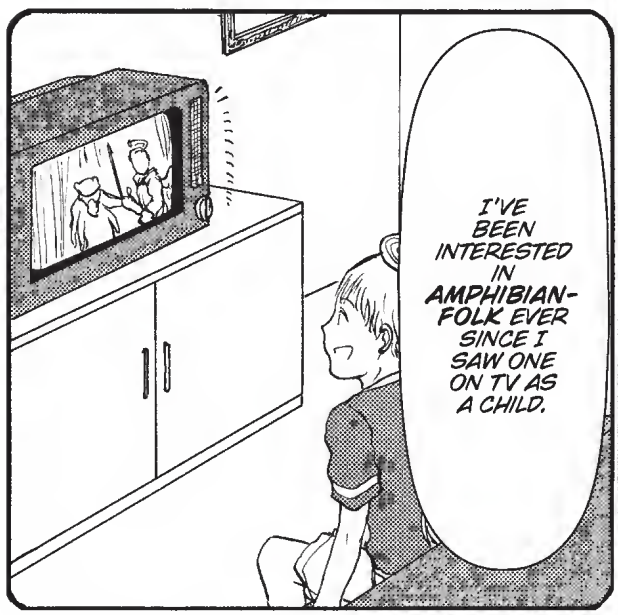
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 6

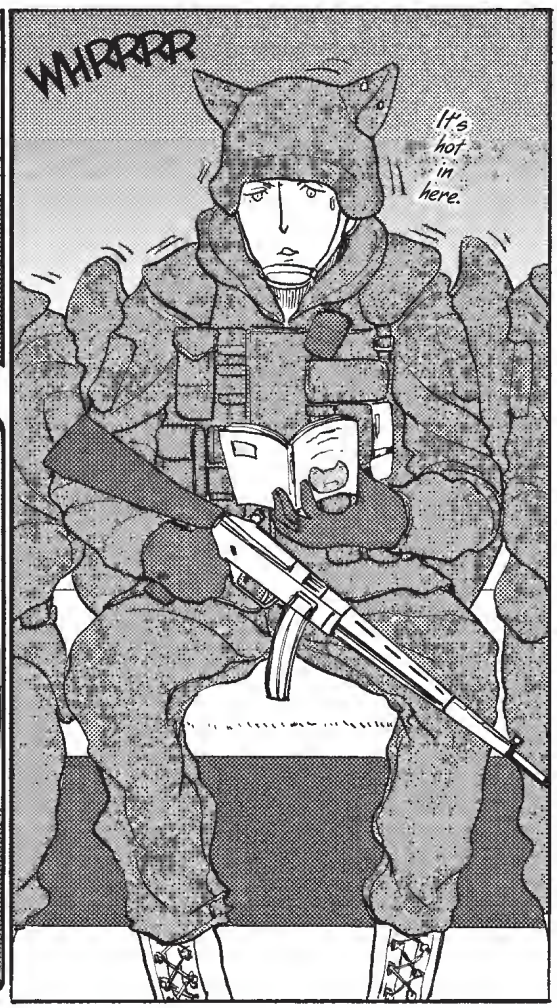
AN CONTRAST TO THE INDIVIDUALITY SHOWN BY THEIR COUNTERPARTS, MEMBERS OF THE WARRIOR SUBSPECIES SEEM FAR MORE COLLECTIVIST: THEY'VE BEEN OBSERVED FOLLOWING ORDERS FROM THE INTELLECTUAL SUBSPECIES; THEY NEVER COMPLAIN OR DISOBEY; THEY SHOW NO VISIBLE SIGNS OF EMOTION OR WILL. IT'S CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THEY'RE NOT JUST ROBOTS— EACH INDIVIDUAL MAKES HER OWN DECISIONS ON HOW TO EXECUTE ORDERS AND CARRIES OUT NONSPECIFIC TASKS USING HER OWN AUTONOMOUS THOUGHT AND JUDGMENT. THIS MAY LEAD SOME TO THINK OF THEM AS SLAVES, BUT IT IS UNWISE TO APPLY OUR IDEOLOGY TO OTHER CIVILIZATIONS. WE LIVE IN AN ENLIGHTENED ERA THAT DOES NOT PERMIT SUCH UNCIVILIZED BEHAVIOR AS FORCING OTHER RACES TO CONFORM TO OUR STANDARDS, AS WE DID IN CENTURIES PAST. REGARDLESS, THE COMPARISON IS UNFAIR, AS HUMAN SLAVES CLEARLY HAVE EMOTION AND INTENTION WHERE THE ANTARCTICAN WARRIOR SUBSPECIES HAS SHOWN NONE.


ROLL ROLL ROLL ROLL

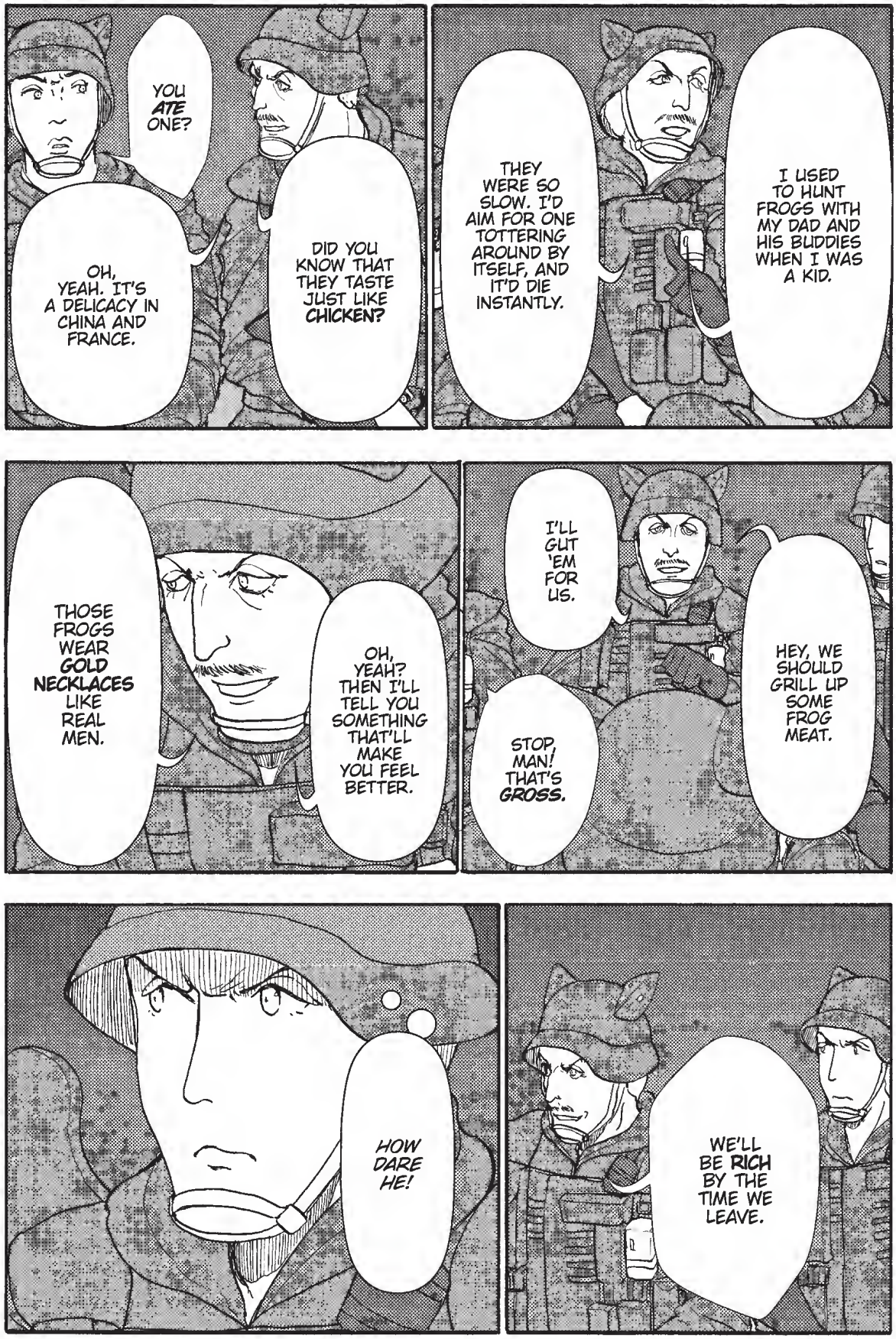
CHAPTER 75


Amphibianfolk
Conversation
Handbook
-Business Edition-

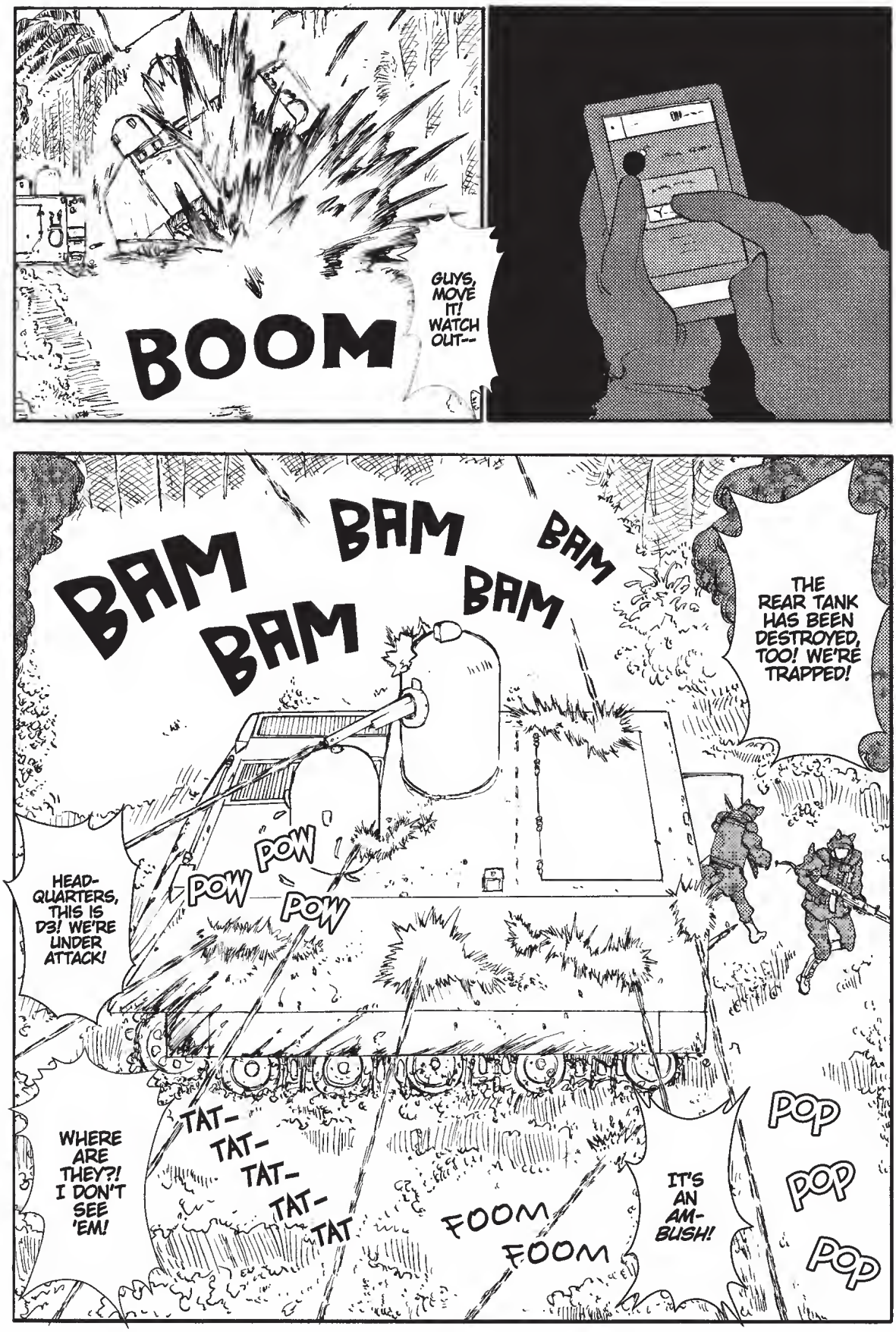

I'VE BEEN INTERESTED IN AMPHIBIAN-FOLK EVER SINCE I SAW ONE ON TV AS A CHILD.


WHRRRR
It's hot in here.

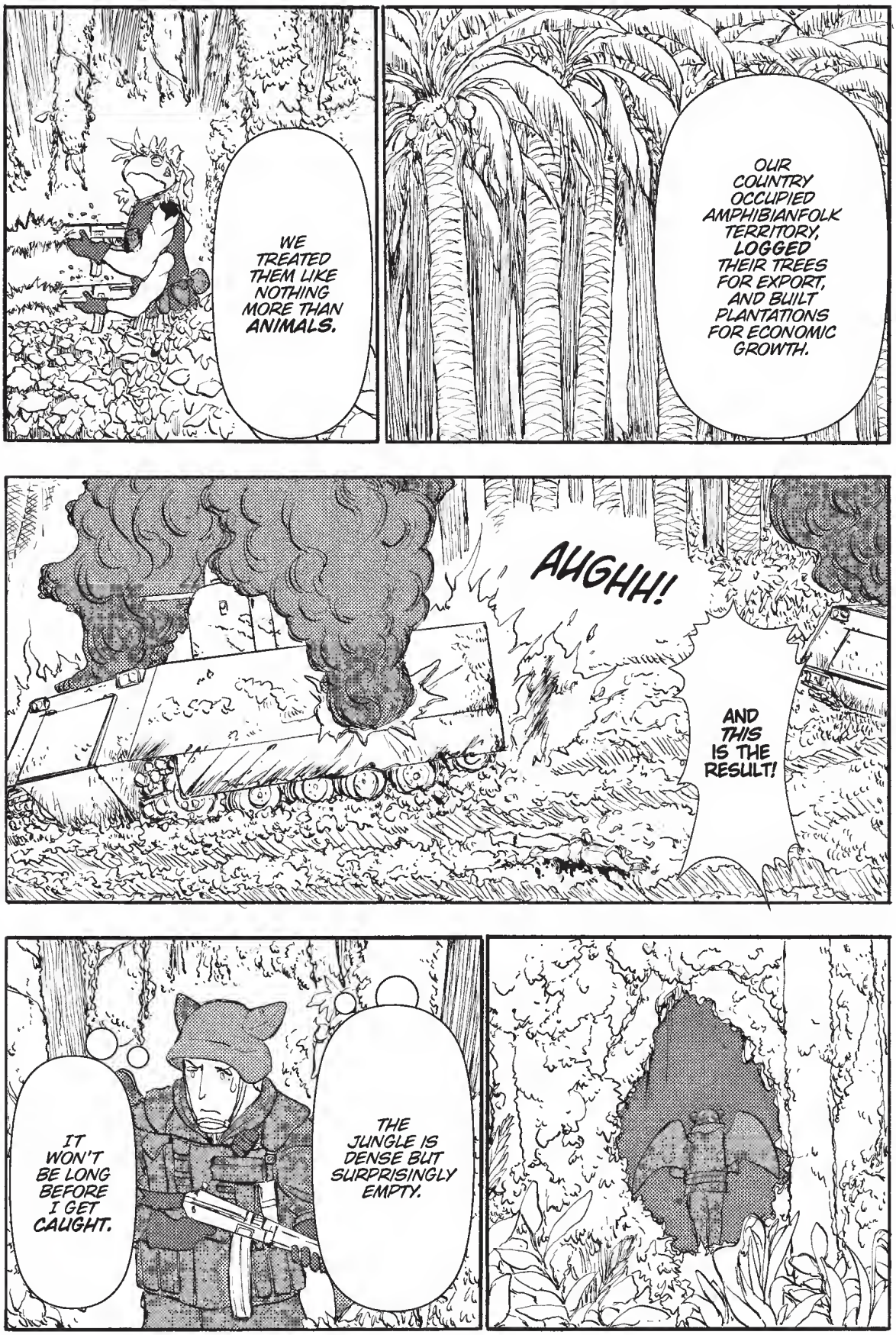
I STUDIED THE AMPHIBIAN-FOLK AND LEARNED SOME OF THEIR LANGUAGE.
UNTIL NOW, ANY BOOKS THAT PAINTED AMPHIBIANFOLK AS AN INTELLIGENT RACE WERE BANNED IN THIS COUNTRY. BUT FOREIGN BOOKS BECAME EASILY OBTAINABLE WITH THE POPULARITY OF THE INTERNET.
ARE YOU STUDYING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS, KID?
IT CONVINCED ME THAT THEY'RE JUST AS INTELLIGENT AS WE ARE.
I WAS MOVED WHEN I WAS ABLE TO MEET THEM.
I HELPED A TRADER HEADING TO A RURAL AREA.
THEY'RE JUST FROGS THAT THROW ROCKS.
YOU DON'T NEED TO READ UP ON THEM.

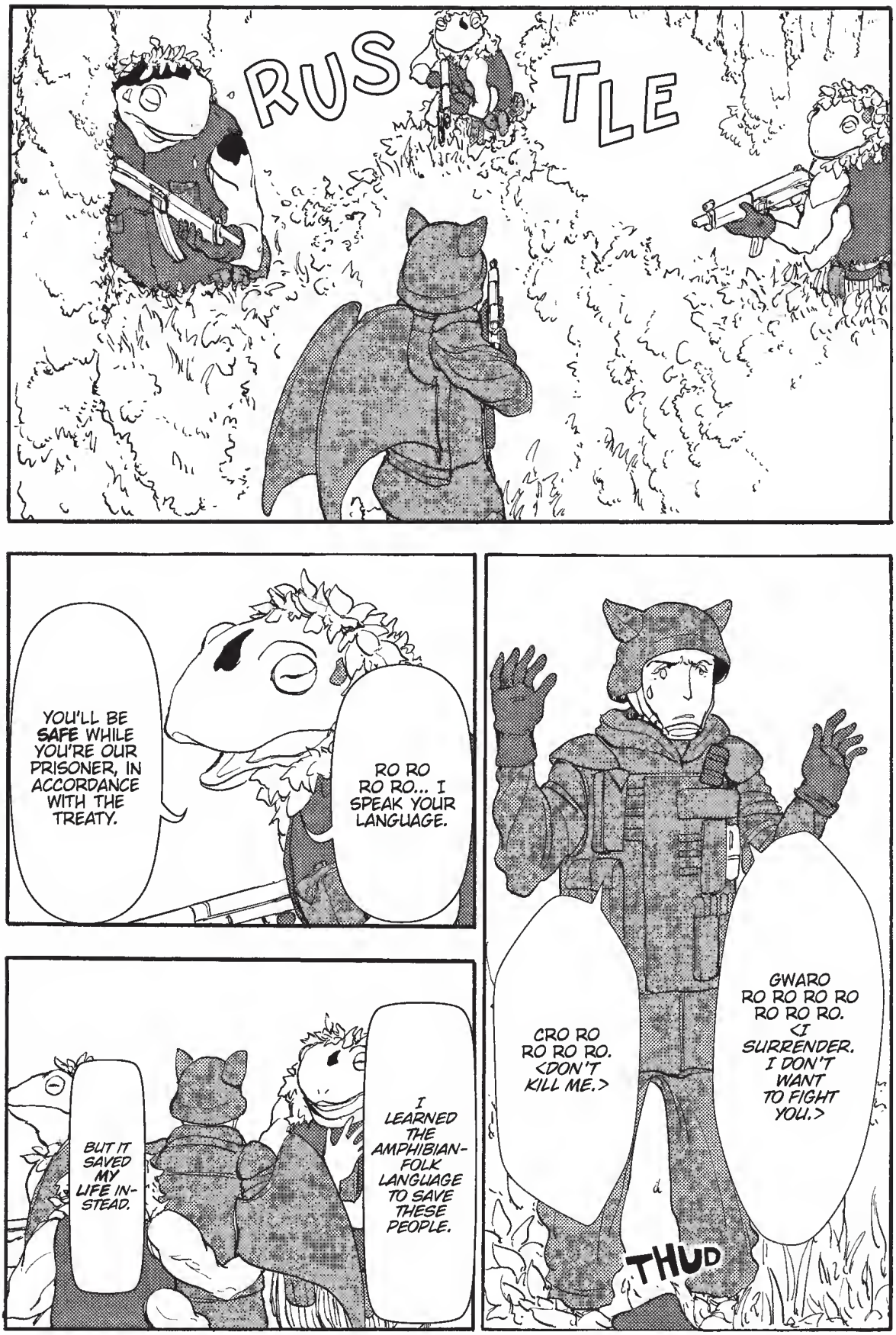

I USED TO HUNT FROGS WITH MY DAD AND HIS BUDDIES WHEN I WAS A KID.
THEY WERE SO SLOW. I'D AIM FOR ONE TOTTERING AROUND BY ITSELF, AND IT'D DIE INSTANTLY.
DID YOU KNOW THAT THEY TASTE JUST LIKE CHICKEN?
YOU ATE ONE?
OH, YEAH. IT'S A DELICACY IN CHINA AND FRANCE.
HEY, WE SHOULD GRILL UP SOME FROG MEAT.
I'LL GUT 'EM FOR US.
STOP, MAN! THAT'S GROSS.
OH, YEAH? THEN I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.
THOSE FROGS WEAR GOLD NECKLACES LIKE REAL MEN.
WE'LL BE RICH BY THE TIME WE LEAVE.
HOW DARE HE!

I'M GONNA PROTECT AMPHIBIANFOLK AND PUT AN END TO THIS PREJUDICE. THAT'S WHY I JOINED THE MILITARY. THE TIME HAS COME TO PUT MY SKILLS TO THE TEST.
ianfolk
rsation
dbook
ss Edition–
THESE REDNECKS TRYING TO ACT LIKE BIG MEN ARE LIKE POISON TO THIS WORLD.
WE GOTTA TEACH THOSE STONE AGE FROGS A LESSON.
RMBL RMBL RMBL
RMBL RMBL RMBL
IT'S ALMOST HUNTIN' TIME.
BONK
WHIRR
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!
THE LEAD TANK'S BEEN DESTROY-ED!
BOOM


BOOM
GUYS, MOVE IT! WATCH OUT--
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
THE REAR TANK HAS BEEN DESTROYED, TOO! WE'RE TRAPPED!
POW POW POW
HEAD-QUARTERS, THIS IS D3! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
TAT- TAT- TAT- TAT- TAT
WHERE ARE THEY?! I DON'T SEE 'EM!
FOOM FOOM
IT'S AN AM-BUSH!
POP POP POP

BLAM
BRAT-
TAT-
TAT-
TAT
AHHH!!
THE FRAG'S GOING ON?! I THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST STONE AGE FROGS!
BOOM
EEP!
DAT
DAT
DAT
DAT
DAT
PTING
RUN FOR THE JUNGLE!
GET DOWN!


WE TREATED THEM LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN ANIMALS.
OUR COUNTRY OCCUPIED AMPHIBIANFOLK TERRITORY, LOGGED THEIR TREES FOR EXPORT, AND BUILT PLANTATIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.
AUGHH!
AND THIS IS THE RESULT!
IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GET CAUGHT.
THE JUNGLE IS DENSE BUT SURPRISINGLY EMPTY.


RUS
TLE
YOU'LL BE SAFE WHILE YOU'RE OUR PRISONER, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TREATY.
RO RO RO RO... I SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE.
CRO RO RO RO RO. <DON'T KILL ME.>
GWARO RO RO RO RO RO RO RO. <I SURRENDER. I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU.>
THUD
BUT IT SAVED MY LIFE INSTEAD.
I LEARNED THE AMPHIBIAN-FOLK LANGUAGE TO SAVE THESE PEOPLE.

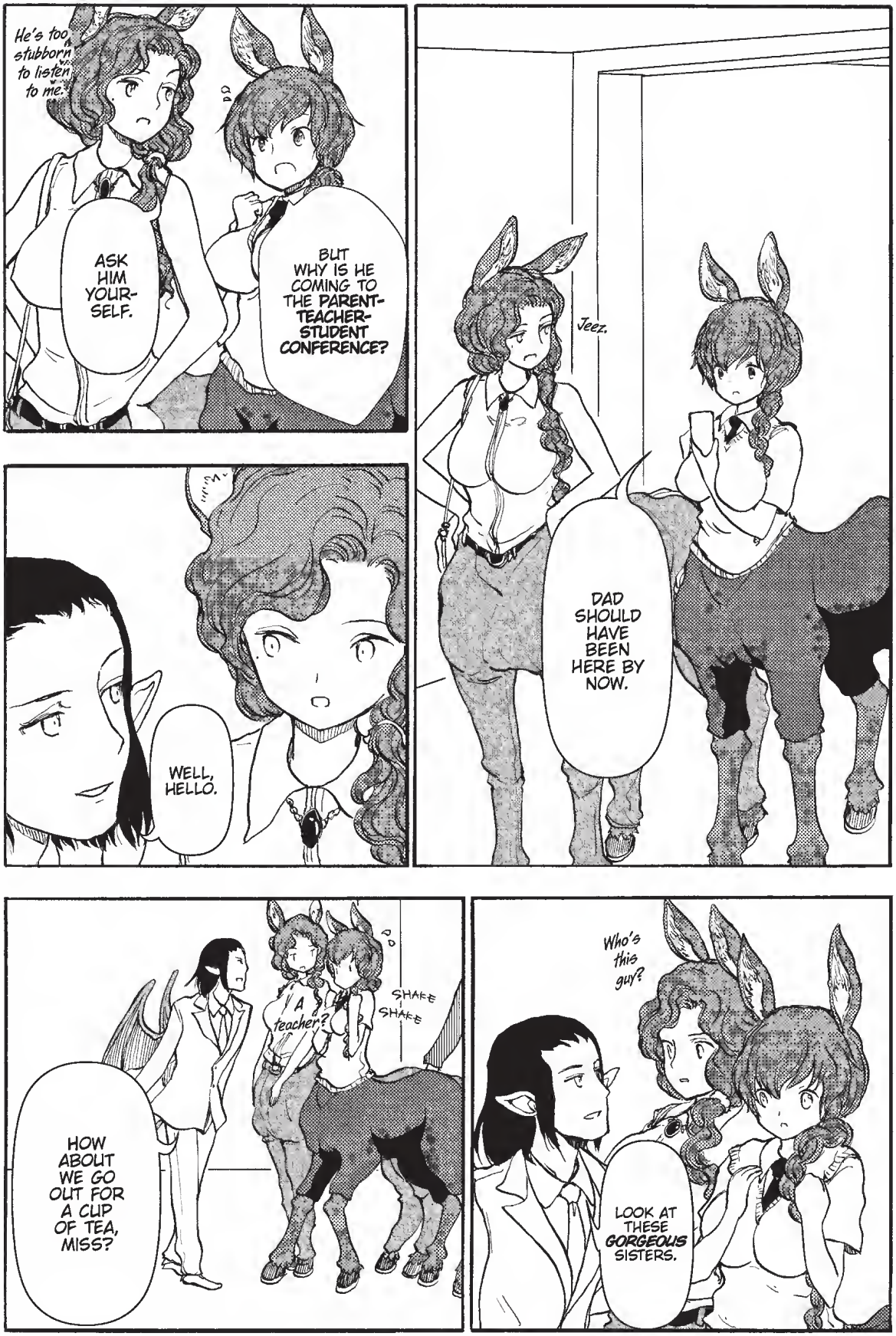
A CentaUr's Life

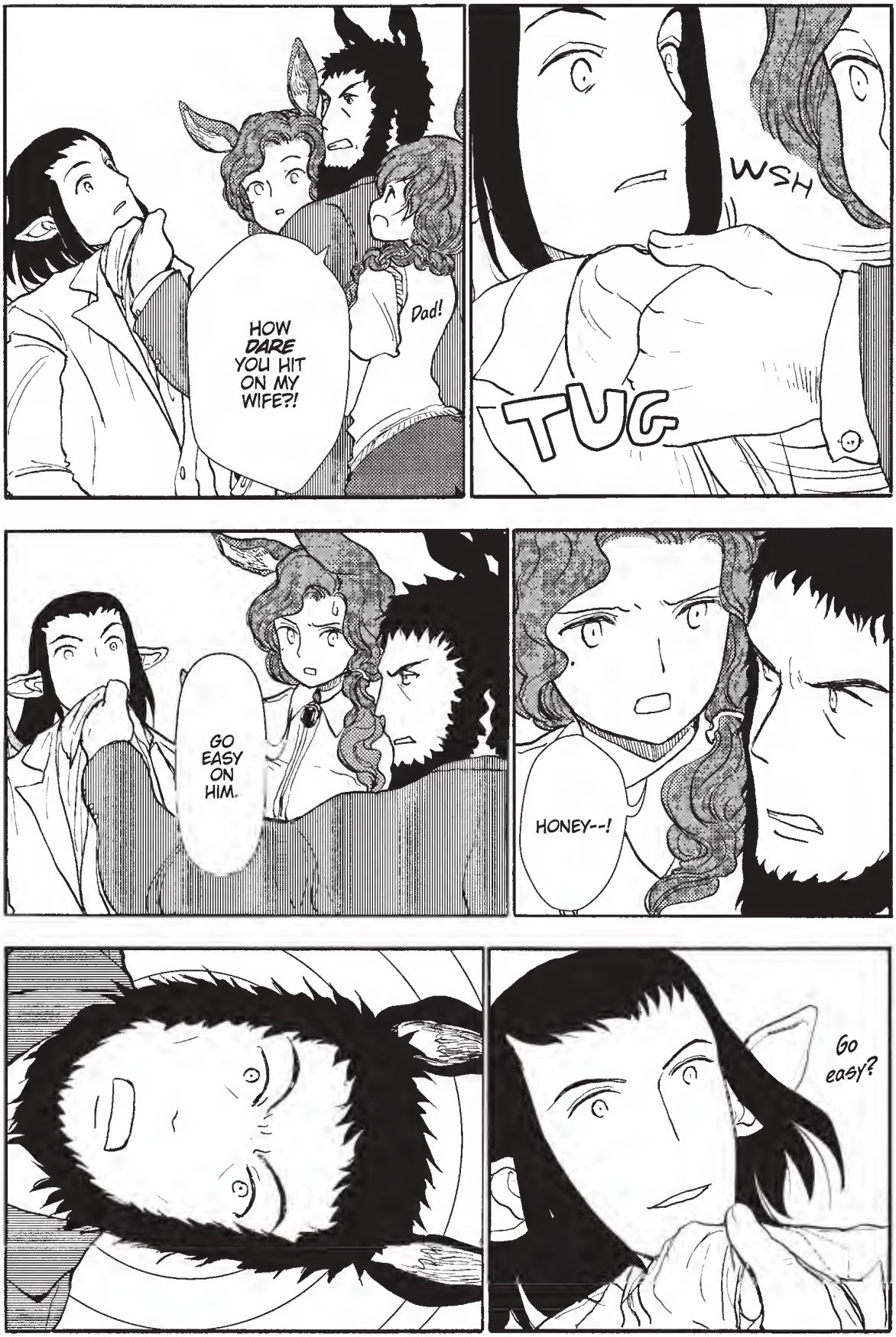
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 7

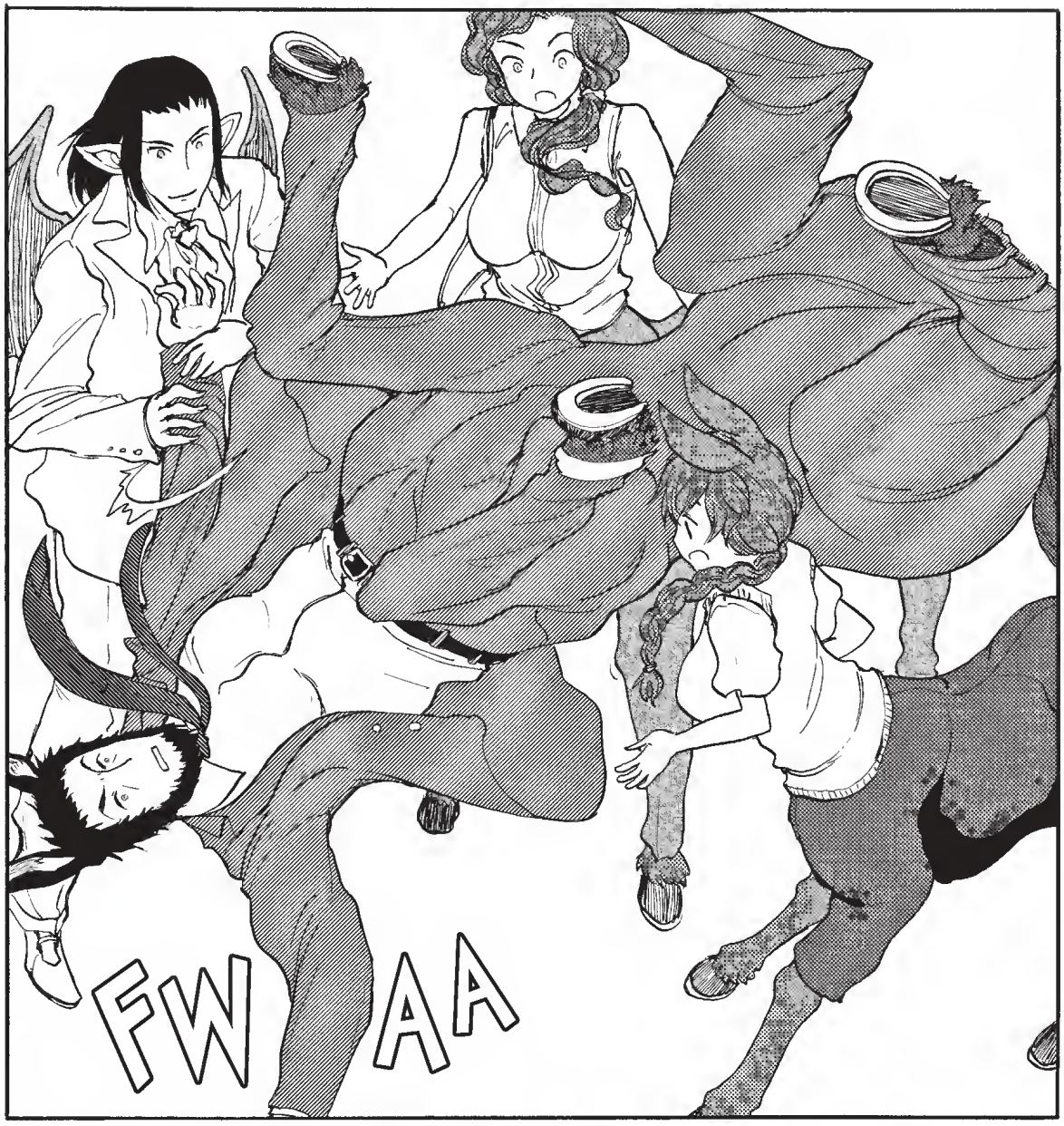
HE PHYSICAL ABILITIES OF ANTARCTICANS ARE VERY DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON SUBSPECIES. THE INTELLECTUAL SUBSPECIES DISPLAYS A LEVEL OF PHYSICAL APTITUDE ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO A PERSON WITH A FAIRLY SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE, BUT WHETHER THIS INDICATES A NEGLECT OF THEIR HEALTH OR RESULTS IN ANY MEDICAL PROBLEMS IS UNKNOWN. THE ANTARCTICANS GO TO EXTREMES TO KEEP OUTSIDERS FROM ACCESSING THIS AND OTHER INFORMATION, PREVENTING US FROM EXPANDING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR RACE. SOME HAVE SPECULATED THAT SINCE NO ANTARCTICANS WITH OBVIOUS INFIRMITY OR DISABILITY HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED BY HUMANS, THEIR RACE MAY HAVE ADVANCED MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY, A GENETIC PREDISPOSITION FOR GOOD HEALTH, OR EVEN SOME UNKNOWN TECHNIQUE TO PROMOTE WELLNESS. ASIDE FROM THEIR APPARENT PHYSICAL INABILITY TO CHEW (AND LACK OF FOOD PREFERENCES, ALLERGIES, AND INTOLERANCES), THEIR DIET AND CONSUMPTION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF HUMANS. THESE DIFFERENCES SUGGEST THE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THEY OBSERVE MEALTIME CUSTOMS AND RITUALS AND THAT THEY SWALLOW FOOD WHOLE, BUT WE DON'T KNOW IF OR HOW THEY DIGEST WHAT THEY CONSUME. THERE HAVE BEEN NO KNOWN ANTARCTICAN DEATHS FROM POISONS, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INDICATE SOME DEGREE OF TOLERANCE. THEY'RE QUITE SENSITIVE TO COLD DESPITE LIVING IN ANTARCTICA, BUT EXHIBIT A HIGH TOLERANCE TO HEAT AND HUMIDITY, WHICH MAY BE INDICATIVE OF CONDITIONS IN THEIR UNDERGROUND CITY.

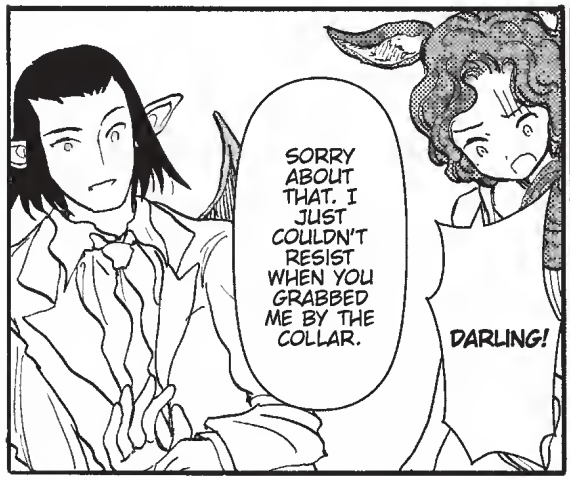
THE WARRIOR SUBSPECIES SHOWS EXCEPTIONAL PHYSICAL PROWESS AND SENSORY ACUITY. THIS WAS PROVEN BY AN INCIDENT IN CANADA THAT INVOLVED AN ARMED, PSYCHOTIC MAN WHO BELIEVED A CLICHÉ CONSPIRACY THEORY ABOUT REPTILIANS MANIPULATING THE HUMAN WORLD. MEMBERS OF THE WARRIOR SUBSPECIES WHO WERE ACTING AS BODYGUARDS SENSED THE DANGER LONG BEFORE ANY HUMANS DID, AND MANAGED TO APPREHEND THE MAN BEFORE HE TRIED TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

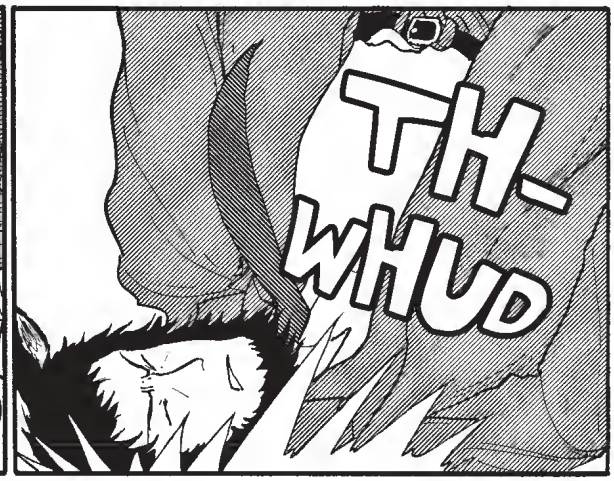
CHAPTER 76


He's too stubborn to listen to me.
ASK HIM YOURSELF.
BUT WHY IS HE COMING TO THE PARENT-TEACHER-STUDENT CONFERENCE?
Jeez.
DAD SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE BY NOW.
WELL, HELLO.
A teacher?
SHAKE SHAKE
HOW ABOUT WE GO OUT FOR A CUP OF TEA, MISS?
Who's this guy?
LOOK AT THESE GORGEOUS SISTERS.

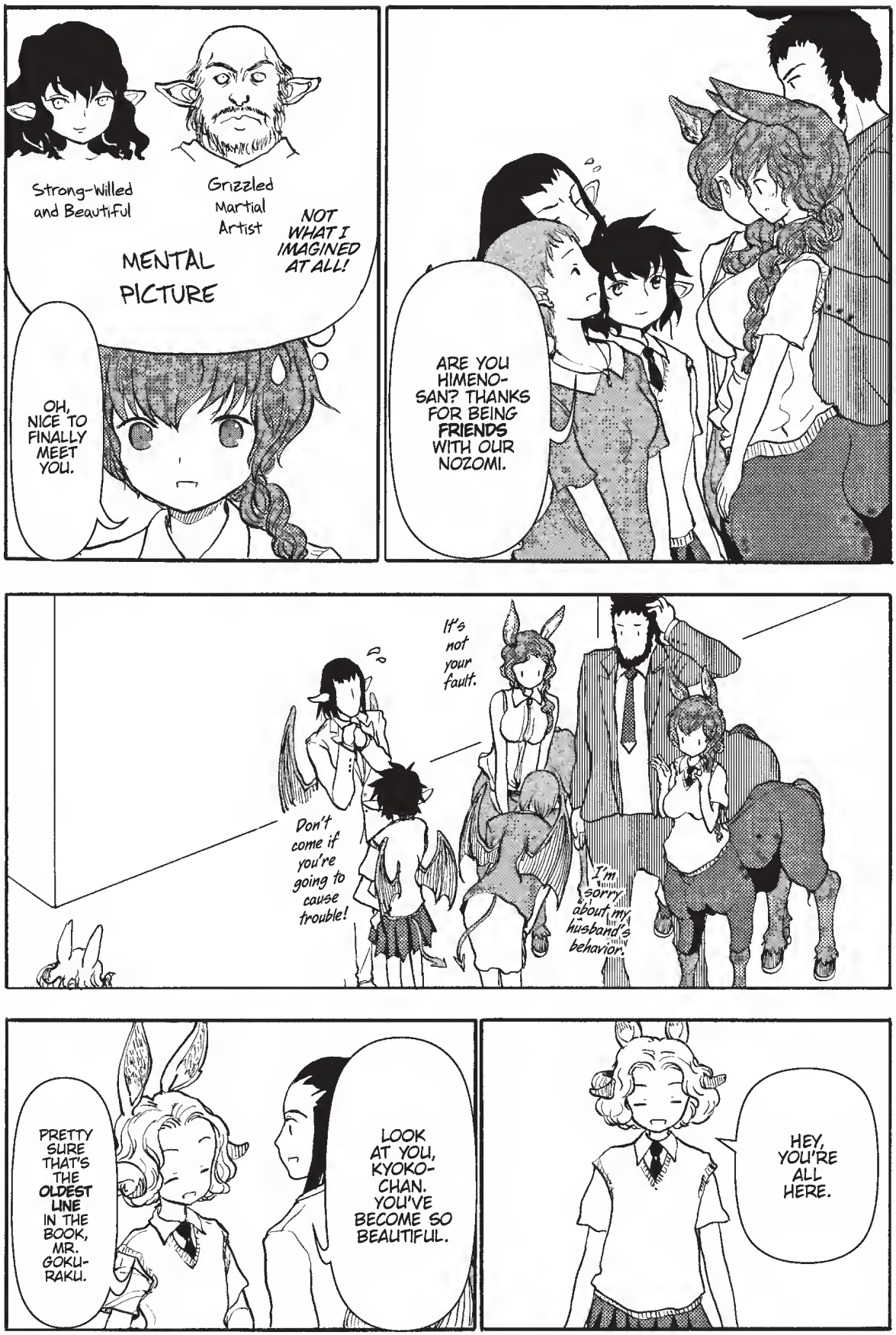

HOW DARE YOU HIT ON MY WIFE?!
Dad!
WSH
TUG
GO EASY ON HIM.
HONEY--!
Go easy?

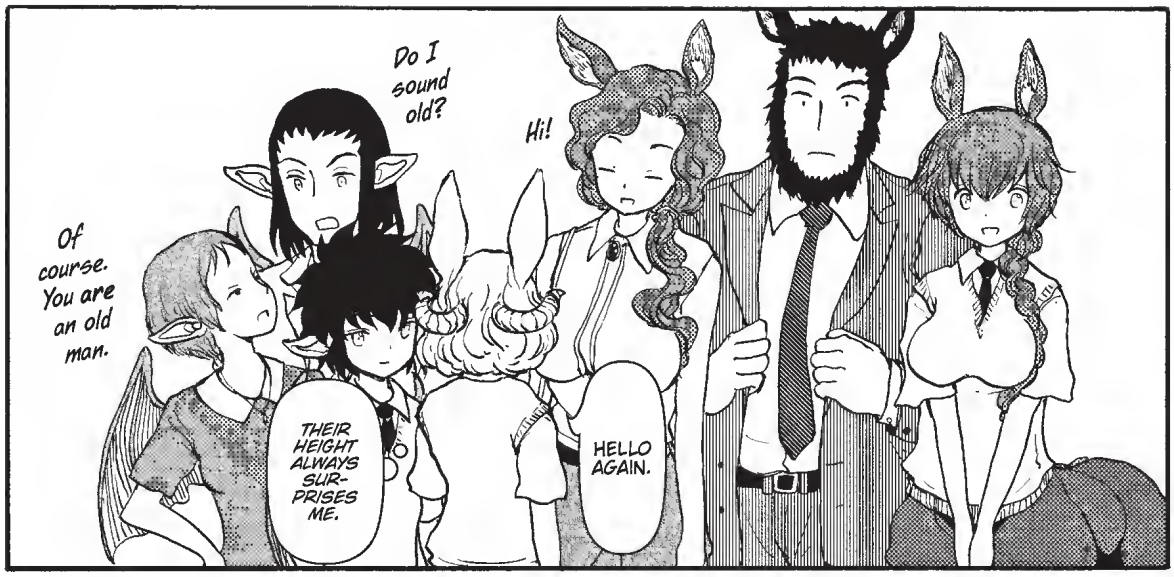

FW
AA


SORRY ABOUT THAT. I JUST COULDN'T RESIST WHEN YOU GRABBED ME BY THE COLLAR.
DARLING!

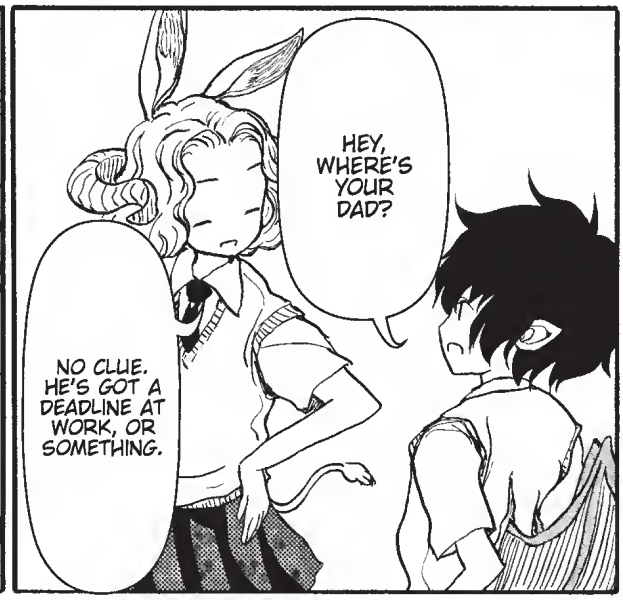

TH-
WHUD

LET'S NOT GET SERIOUS HERE.
I CAN'T GO EASY ON A FELLOW LIKE YOU.
Ooh, he's pretty nimble.
Damn you!
HOP
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T GO EASY ON HIM, OLD MAN?!
HEY, I SAID GO EASY--
WHACK
AUGH, WE CAN'T TAKE YOU ANY-WHERE!
SORRY, MR. KIMIHARA.
NOZOMI-CHAN!

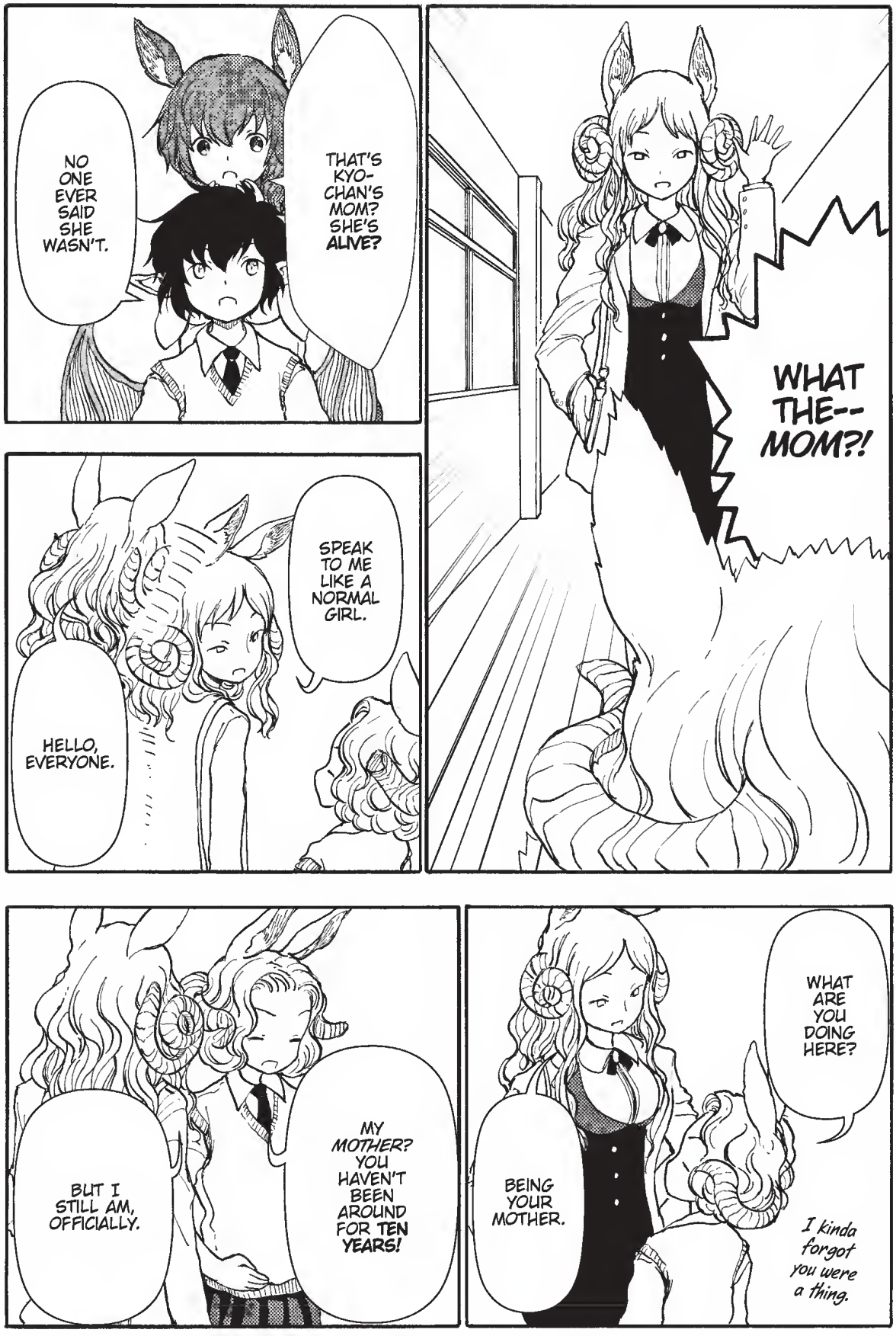

Strong-Willed and Beautiful
Grizzled Martial Artist
MENTAL PICTURE
NOT WHAT I IMAGINED AT ALL!
OH, NICE TO FINALLY MEET YOU.
ARE YOU HIMENO-SAN? THANKS FOR BEING FRIENDS WITH OUR NOZOMI.
It's not your fault.
Don't come if you're going to cause trouble!
I'm sorry about my husband's behavior.
PRETTY SURE THAT'S THE OLDEST LINE IN THE BOOK, MR. GOKURAKU.
LOOK AT YOU, KYOKO-CHAN. YOU'VE BECOME SO BEAUTIFUL.
HEY, YOU'RE ALL HERE.

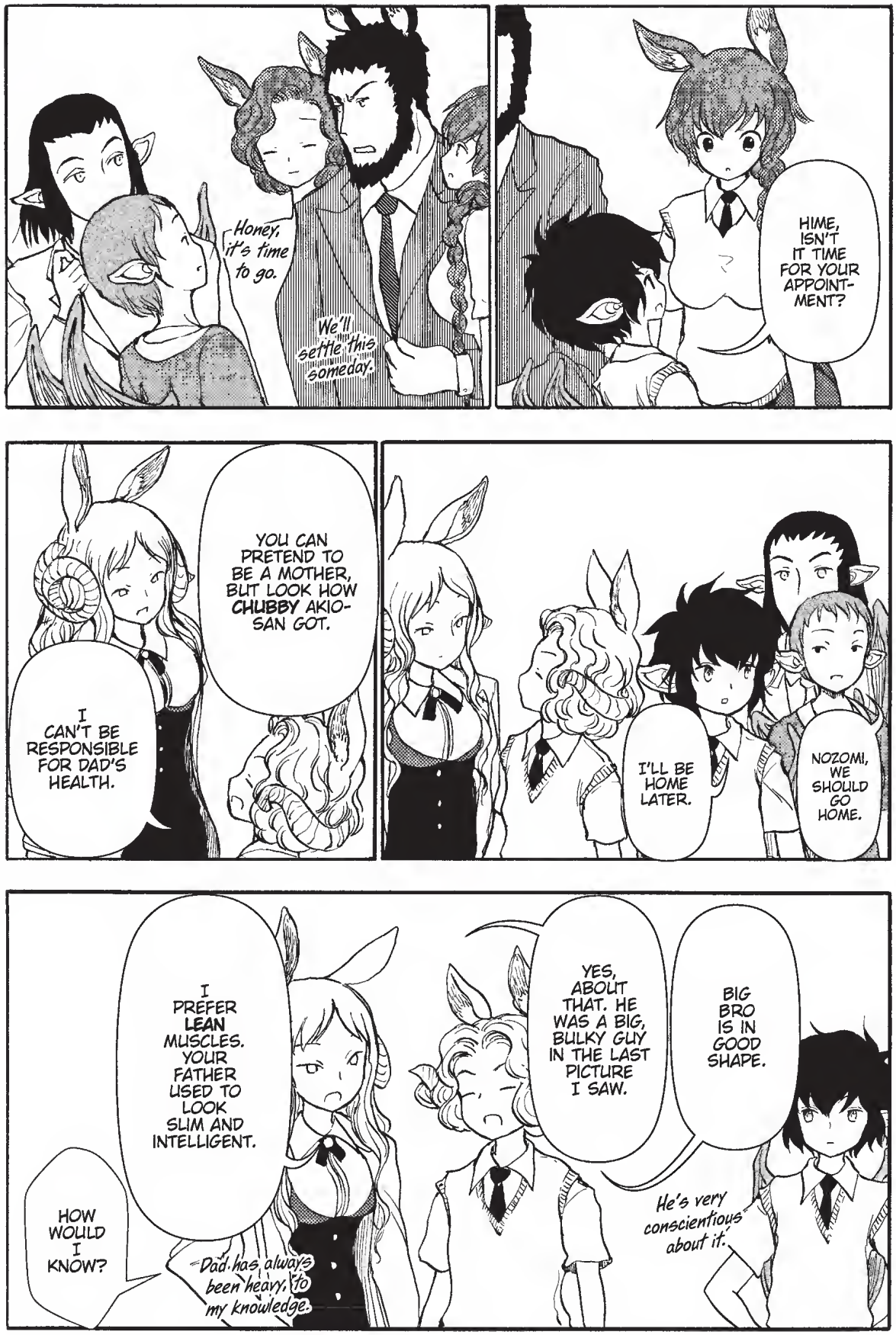

Do I sound old?
Hi!
Of course. You are an old man.
THEIR HEIGHT ALWAYS SURPRISES ME.
HELLO AGAIN.

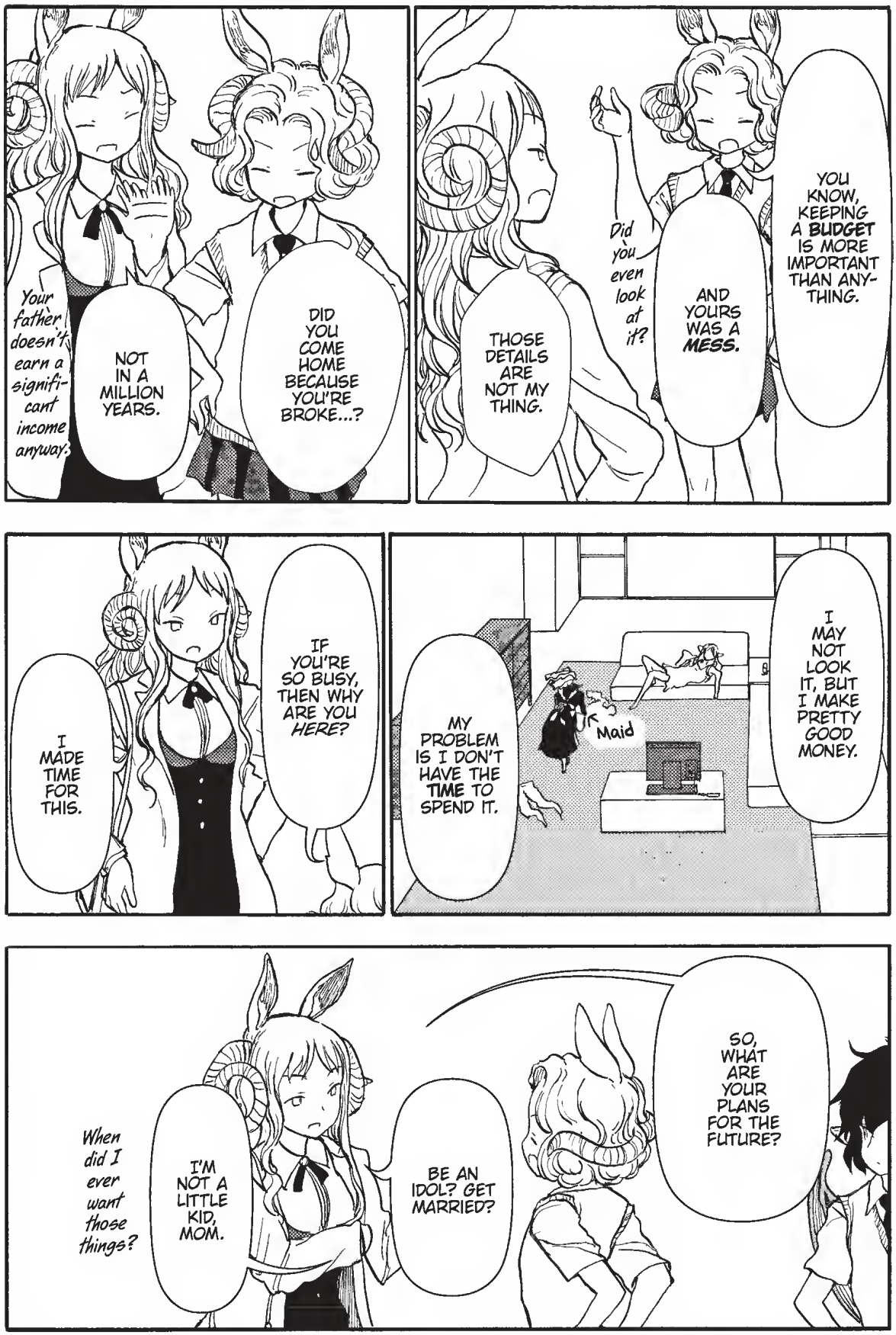
I CAN HAVE A STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE INSTEAD, NO BIG DEAL.


HEY, WHERE'S YOUR DAD?
NO CLUE. HE'S GOT A DEADLINE AT WORK, OR SOMETHING.

THERE YOU ARE, KYOKO-CHAN!
BUT WHY BOTHER HAVING MY BROTHER COME?
IF I WAS THE PRESIDENT'S SISTER, THE PRESIDENT WOULD PROBABLY SHOW UP.


WHAT THE-- MOM?!
THAT'S KYO-CHAN'S MOM? SHE'S ALIVE?
NO ONE EVER SAID SHE WASN'T.
SPEAK TO ME LIKE A NORMAL GIRL.
HELLO, EVERYONE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I kinda forgot you were a thing.
BEING YOUR MOTHER.
MY MOTHER? YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AROUND FOR TEN YEARS!
BUT I STILL AM, OFFICIALLY.


Honey, it's time to go.
We'll settle this someday.
HIME, ISN'T IT TIME FOR YOUR APPOINT-MENT?
YOU CAN PRETEND TO BE A MOTHER, BUT LOOK HOW CHUBBY AKIO-SAN GOT.
I CAN'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DAD'S HEALTH.
I'LL BE HOME LATER.
NOZOMI, WE SHOULD GO HOME.
I PREFER LEAN MUSCLES. YOUR FATHER USED TO LOOK SLIM AND INTELLIGENT.
HOW WOULD I KNOW?
Dad has always been heavy, to my knowledge.
YES, ABOUT THAT. HE WAS A BIG, BULKY GUY IN THE LAST PICTURE I SAW.
BIG BRO IS IN GOOD SHAPE.
He's very conscientious about it.


Your father doesn't earn a significant income anyway.
NOT IN A MILLION YEARS.
DID YOU COME HOME BECAUSE YOU'RE BROKE...?
Did you even look at it?
THOSE DETAILS ARE NOT MY THING.
AND YOURS WAS A MESS.
YOU KNOW, KEEPING A BUDGET IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING.
I MADE TIME FOR THIS.
IF YOU'RE SO BUSY, THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?
MY PROBLEM IS I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO SPEND IT.
Maid
I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I MAKE PRETTY GOOD MONEY.
When did I ever want those things?
I'M NOT A LITTLE KID, MOM.
BE AN IDOL? GET MARRIED?
SO, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

BEING A WRITER ISN'T VERY LUCRATIVE.
AND BECOMING A POLITICIAN REQUIRES **MONEY,** WHICH YOU DON'T HAVE.
WELL, MY WISH IS TO STUDY POLITICAL ECONOMY OR LITERATURE AT FIRST IMPERIAL.
I'LL GET A **NORMAL JOB** WHEN I GRADUATE.
THEN SHUT UP AND **BUTT OUT.**
JUST AGREE TO EVERYTHING MY TEACHER SAYS.
NOPE, I END UP SPENDING AWAY THE MONEY I MAKE.
When I do have the time to spend it.
DON'T *YOU* MAKE A LOT OF MONEY? IF YOU LOAN ME SOME, I'LL LET YOU BE MY MOTHER.
IT'S TRUE, BUT I'M STILL CURIOUS.
I DON'T WANT TO MISS THE **FUN PART.**
I KNOW THESE LITTLE DETAILS ARE JUST ANNOYING TO YOU, ANYWAY.

YOUR BROTHER SAYS HE'S GOING TO BE A BASEBALL PLAYER... CAN HE MAKE IT?
NOPE.
BUT HE'S A HARD WORKER. I THINK THINGS WILL WORK OUT FOR HIM.
He has a better chance of making it than someone who cuts corners.
I THINK YOU'RE MATURE FOR YOUR AGE.
ON WHAT PLANET?!
YOU REALLY DO TAKE AFTER ME.
BUT...
YOU'RE HOPING TO DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY, LIKE A BOY.
LATELY, I'VE BEEN THINKING THAT'S AN ISSUE.

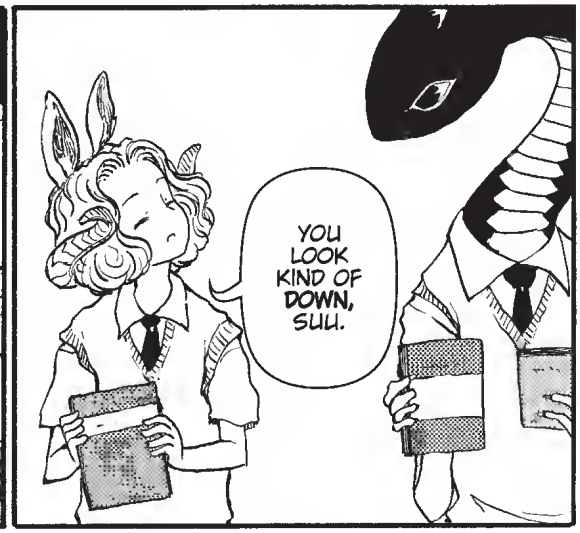
AND MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S ALWAYS A GOOD THING.
YOU **SCOFF** AT ANYONE WHO DREAMS OF BEING THE FIRST LADY OR THE WIFE OF A CELEBRITY, DON'T YOU?
I BET YOU THINK YOU'RE **WORTHLESS** UNLESS YOU GAIN POWER OR FORTUNE ON YOUR OWN.
YOU COULD END UP LIKE THAT WOMAN AT THE GENERAL STORE.
WOULD YOU STOP **DISCOURAGING** ME? I HAVEN'T EVEN FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL!
KYO-CHAN, YOU'RE UP NEXT.
LET'S GO.
JUST KEEP YOUR MOUTH ***SHUT,*** OKAY?

UM, ARE YOU MRS. QUETZAL-COATL?
I'M HER BIO-LOGICAL OLDER SISTER.
BUT I'M HERE AS HER SUPERIOR AND GUARDIAN.
SASSASSUL-SAN HAS ADJUSTED WELL TO OUR SOCIETY.
SHE'S DOING GREAT IN MATH AND SCIENCE, AS EXPECTED. SHE'S MAKING SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN LIBERAL ARTS, TOO.
I SEE. WELL, THEN...
SHOULD I JUST DO THIS THE NORMAL WAY?

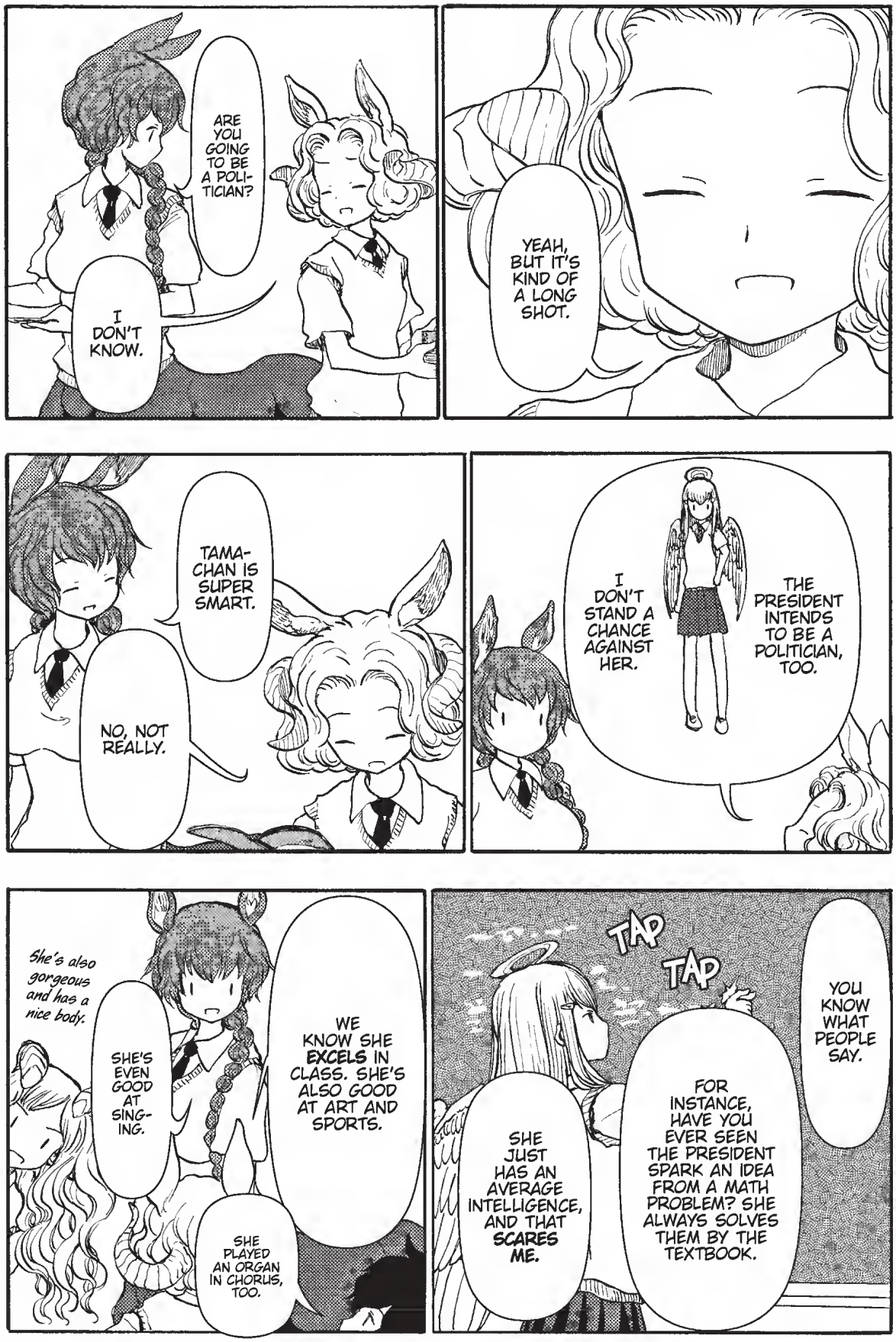
I'M FORTUNATE TO HAVE GREAT STUDENTS AROUND ME.
SO, YOU'RE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS ON YOUR INTENDED STUDIES.
STUDIES REVOLVING AROUND SOCIETAL UNDERSTANDING BASED ON ACCUMULATED INFORMATION.
WHAT'S LIBERAL ARTS?
SHE'LL UTILIZE THEM IN **FOREIGN RELATIONSHIPS** BETWEEN ANTARCTICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.
NO, I HEARD THAT SHE CAN ACQUIRE HIGH LEVEL ACADEMICS AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE FROM THIS SCHOOL.
SO, UM, IS SASSASSUL-SAN PLANNING TO GO TO **COLLEGE?**
OF COURSE.
THIS MAY BE NONE OF MY CONCERN, BUT MOST OF OUR GRADUATES GO TO PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGES. PLEASE DON'T DO ANYTHING TO **DISSUADE** OTHER STUDENTS FROM PURSUING THAT GOAL.
ARE YOU SAYING SHE WILL ENTER THE WORK-FORCE?

UNHH!
SO, HOW'D IT GO?
WELL, SO-SO.

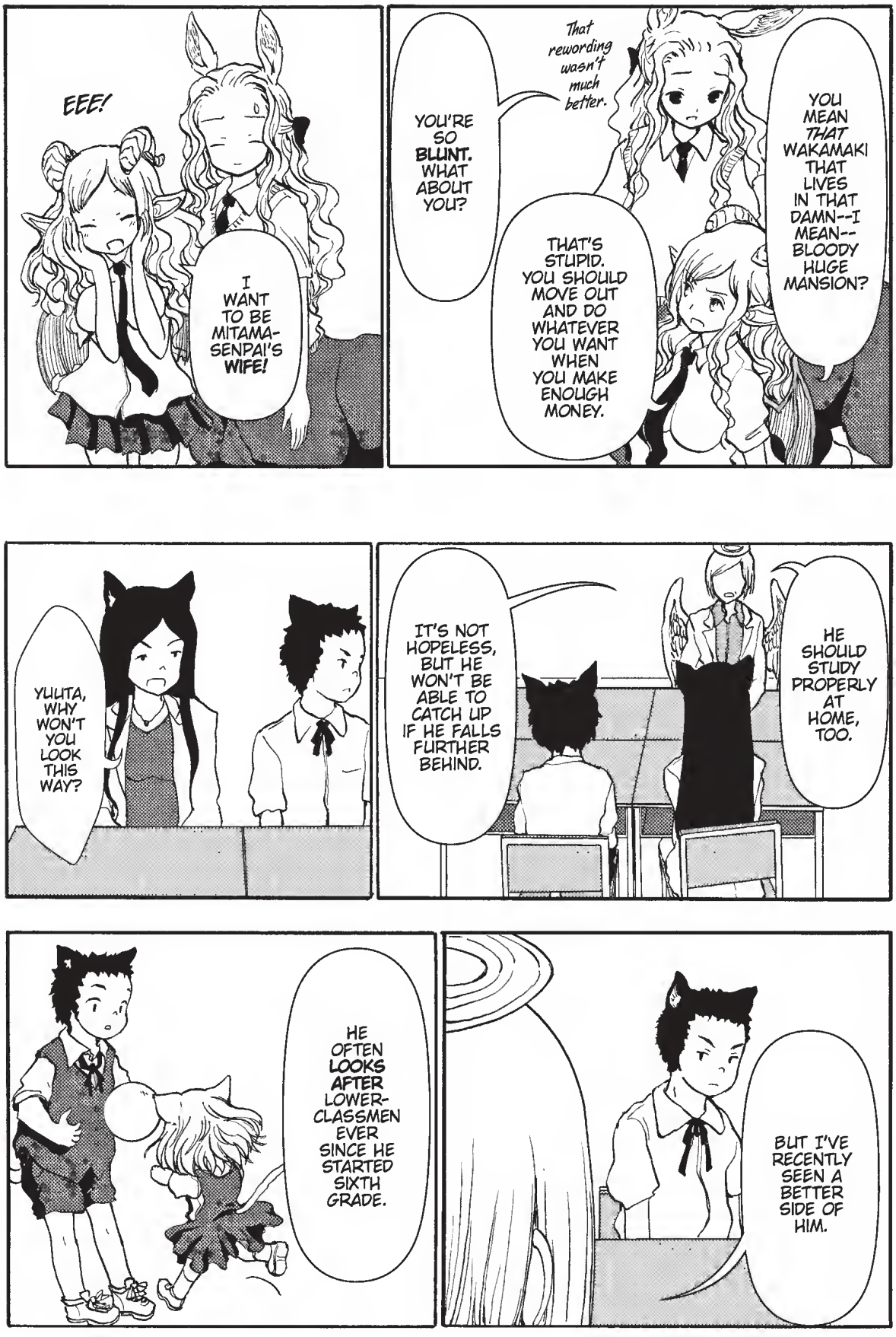
IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.
REALLY? MY PEOPLE DON'T SHOW EMOTIONS LIKE THAT.

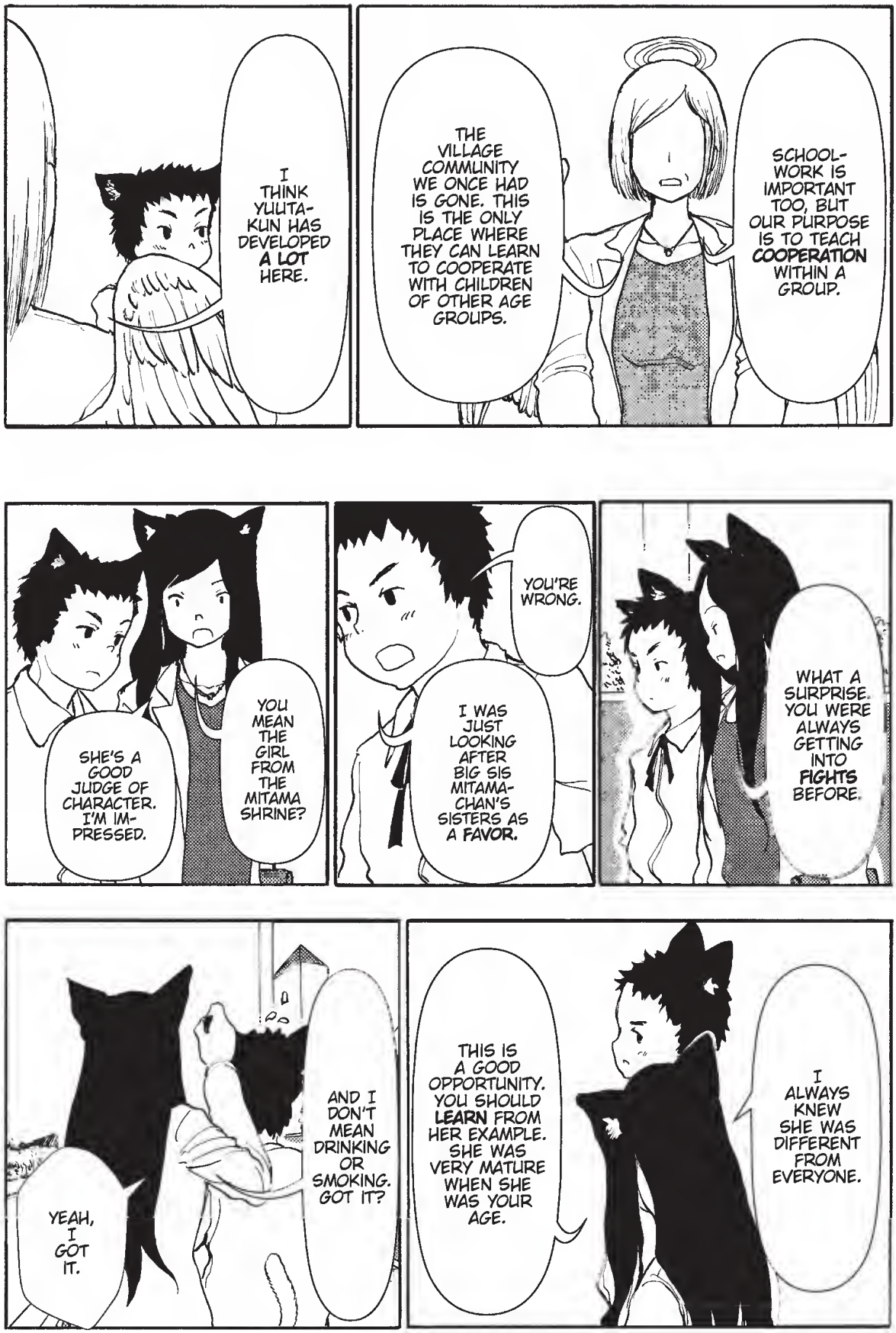

YOU LOOK KIND OF DOWN, SUU.

BUT WHAT'S A BIG DEAL IS YOU, NOZOMI.
IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL.
SO, I'M BAD AT SCHOOL. WHO CARES?
OH, YOU WANNA TAKE OVER THE DOJO?
What are you up to?
OF COURSE, I TOLD HER THAT SHE CAN COUNT ON ME.
YOUR MOM ASKED ME TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR SCHOOL WORK.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THE SUMMER.
MWA HA HA!
YOU GONNA APPLY FOR FIRST IMPERIAL, KYO-CHAN?
POUT
NICE FACE.


ARE YOU GOING TO BE A POLI-TICIAN?
I DON'T KNOW.
YEAH, BUT IT'S KIND OF A LONG SHOT.
TAMA-CHAN IS SUPER SMART.
NO, NOT REALLY.
I DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST HER.
THE PRESIDENT INTENDS TO BE A POLITICIAN, TOO.
She's also gorgeous and has a nice body.
SHE'S EVEN GOOD AT SING-ING.
WE KNOW SHE EXCELS IN CLASS. SHE'S ALSO GOOD AT ART AND SPORTS.
SHE PLAYED AN ORGAN IN CHORUS, TOO.
TAP
TAP
YOU KNOW WHAT PEOPLE SAY.
FOR INSTANCE, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE PRESIDENT SPARK AN IDEA FROM A MATH PROBLEM? SHE ALWAYS SOLVES THEM BY THE TEXTBOOK.
SHE JUST HAS AN AVERAGE INTELLIGENCE, AND THAT SCARES ME.

SHE MAY BE NO MATCH FOR MY BRAIN, BUT SHE'LL SURPASS ME SOMEDAY.
NO ONE CAN COMPETE WITH HER.
SHE'S PROVEN HER ABILITY TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.
MAYBE SOMEONE OPPOSITE, LIKE YOU, WOULD BE MORE COMPATIBLE WITH HER.
Her beauty is genetically inherited, though.
SHE CAN DO ANYTHING, BECAUSE SHE KEEPS TRYING UNTIL SHE SUCCEEDS.
SHE HAS THE STRONG WILL AND INSANE ENERGY TO HELP HER ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.
BUT MY DAD WANTS ME TO GO TO KANATA UNIVERSITY, WHERE I CAN COMMUTE FROM HOME.
THAT'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD DECIDE.
WHY DON'T YOU APPLY TO FIRST IMPERIAL, TOO?
I DON'T THINK BEING A POLITICIAN IS FOR ME.
MY MOM THINKS I SHOULD GO TO A GOOD SCHOOL THAT WILL CHALLENGE ME.
LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, HUH?
YOU LOOK DEPRESSED.
I HAVE TO SUCCEED MY GRANDFATHER.


EEE!
I WANT TO BE MITAMA-SENPAI'S WIFE!
YOU'RE SO BLUNT. WHAT ABOUT YOU?
That rewording wasn't much better.
THAT'S STUPID. YOU SHOULD MOVE OUT AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WHEN YOU MAKE ENOUGH MONEY.
YOU MEAN THAT WAKAMAKI THAT LIVES IN THAT DAMN--I MEAN-- BLOODY HUGE MANSION?
YUUTA, WHY WON'T YOU LOOK THIS WAY?
IT'S NOT HOPELESS, BUT HE WON'T BE ABLE TO CATCH UP IF HE FALLS FURTHER BEHIND.
HE SHOULD STUDY PROPERLY AT HOME, TOO.
HE OFTEN LOOKS AFTER LOWER-CLASSMEN EVER SINCE HE STARTED SIXTH GRADE.
BUT I'VE RECENTLY SEEN A BETTER SIDE OF HIM.


I THINK YUUTA-KUN HAS DEVELOPED A LOT HERE.
THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY WE ONCE HAD IS GONE. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THEY CAN LEARN TO COOPERATE WITH CHILDREN OF OTHER AGE GROUPS.
SCHOOL-WORK IS IMPORTANT TOO, BUT OUR PURPOSE IS TO TEACH COOPERATION WITHIN A GROUP.
SHE'S A GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER. I'M IM-PRESSED.
YOU MEAN THE GIRL FROM THE MITAMA SHRINE?
YOU'RE WRONG.
I WAS JUST LOOKING AFTER BIG SIS MITAMA-CHAN'S SISTERS AS A FAVOR.
WHAT A SURPRISE. YOU WERE ALWAYS GETTING INTO FIGHTS BEFORE.
YEAH, I GOT IT.
AND I DON'T MEAN DRINKING OR SMOKING. GOT IT?
THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY. YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM HER EXAMPLE. SHE WAS VERY MATURE WHEN SHE WAS YOUR AGE.
I ALWAYS KNEW SHE WAS DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE.

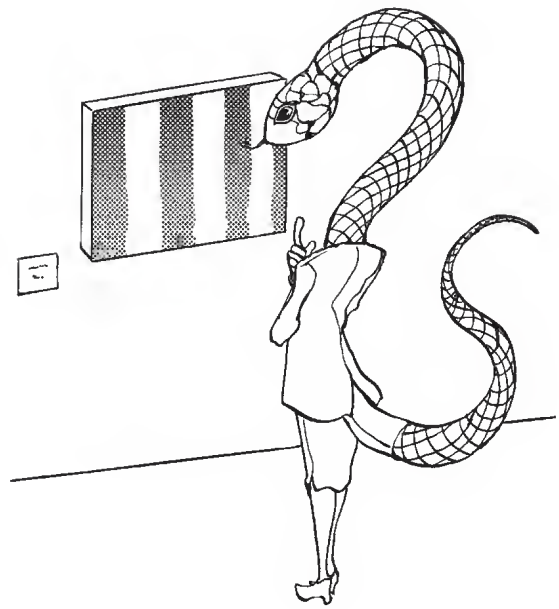
A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 8

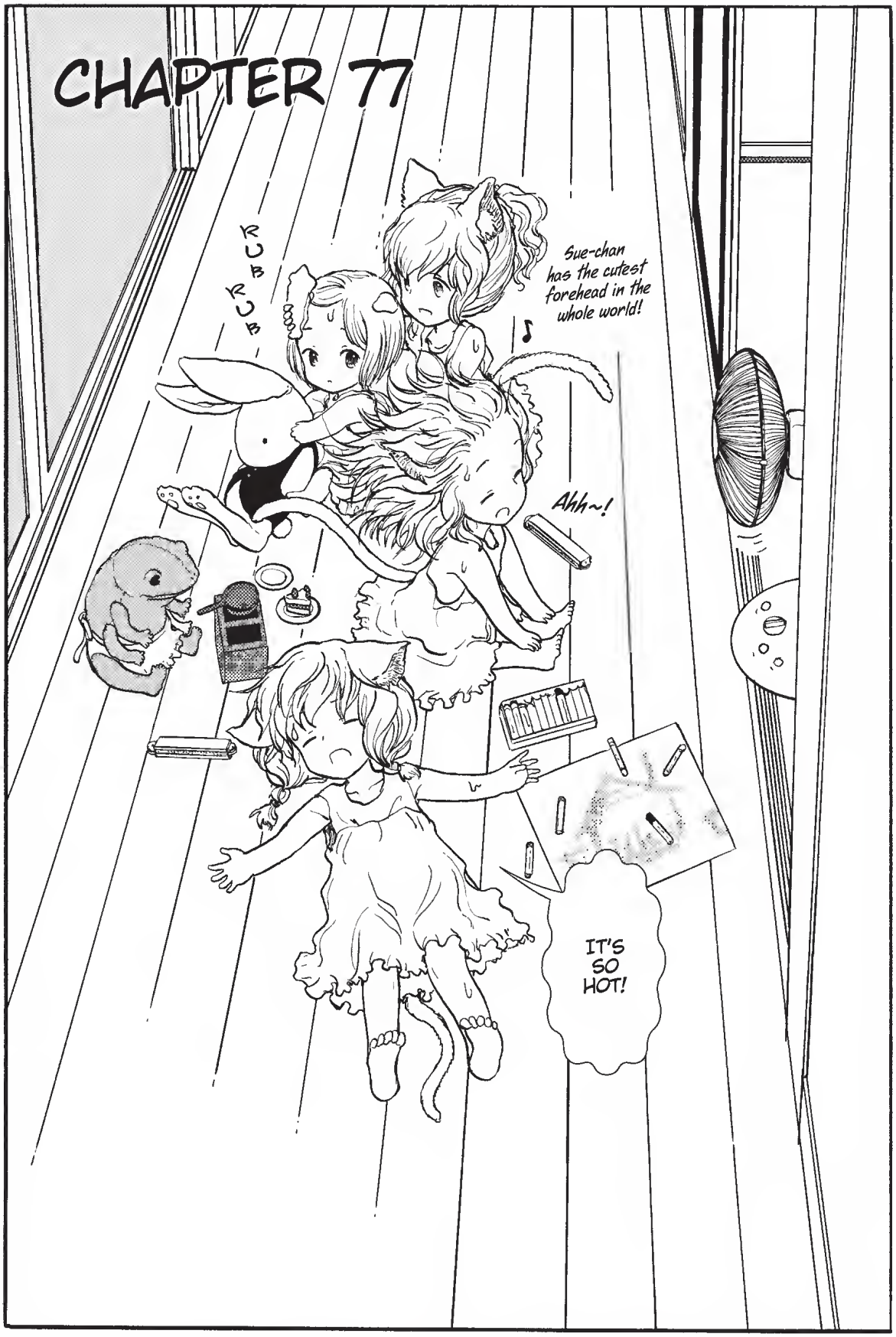
ALTHOUGH HUMANS ARE HIGHLY INTERESTED, LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE BREADTH OF ANTARCTICAN KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION. WE HAVE YET TO CONFIRM WHETHER THE INTELLECTUAL SUBSPECIES IS TRULY AS INTELLIGENT AND LEARNED AS THEIR NAME SUGGESTS. ALSO LACKING IS CONFIRMATION OF THEIR PURPORTED ABILITIES SUCH AS PERFECT MEMORY, EXCELLENT COMPUTING POWER, AND RAPID ACQUISITION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES. COMPOUNDING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP CREATED BY ANTARCTICAN SECRECY IS THE FACT THAT HUMANS HAVE YET TO FULLY GRASP THEIR WRITTEN OR SPOKEN LANGUAGE. IT'S BELIEVED THAT THE ANTARCTICAN CIVILIZATION MAY HAVE ORIGINATED AS FAR BACK AS 40 MILLION YEARS AGO, AND THAT THEY BEGAN BUILDING THEIR UNDERGROUND CITY AT THAT TIME.

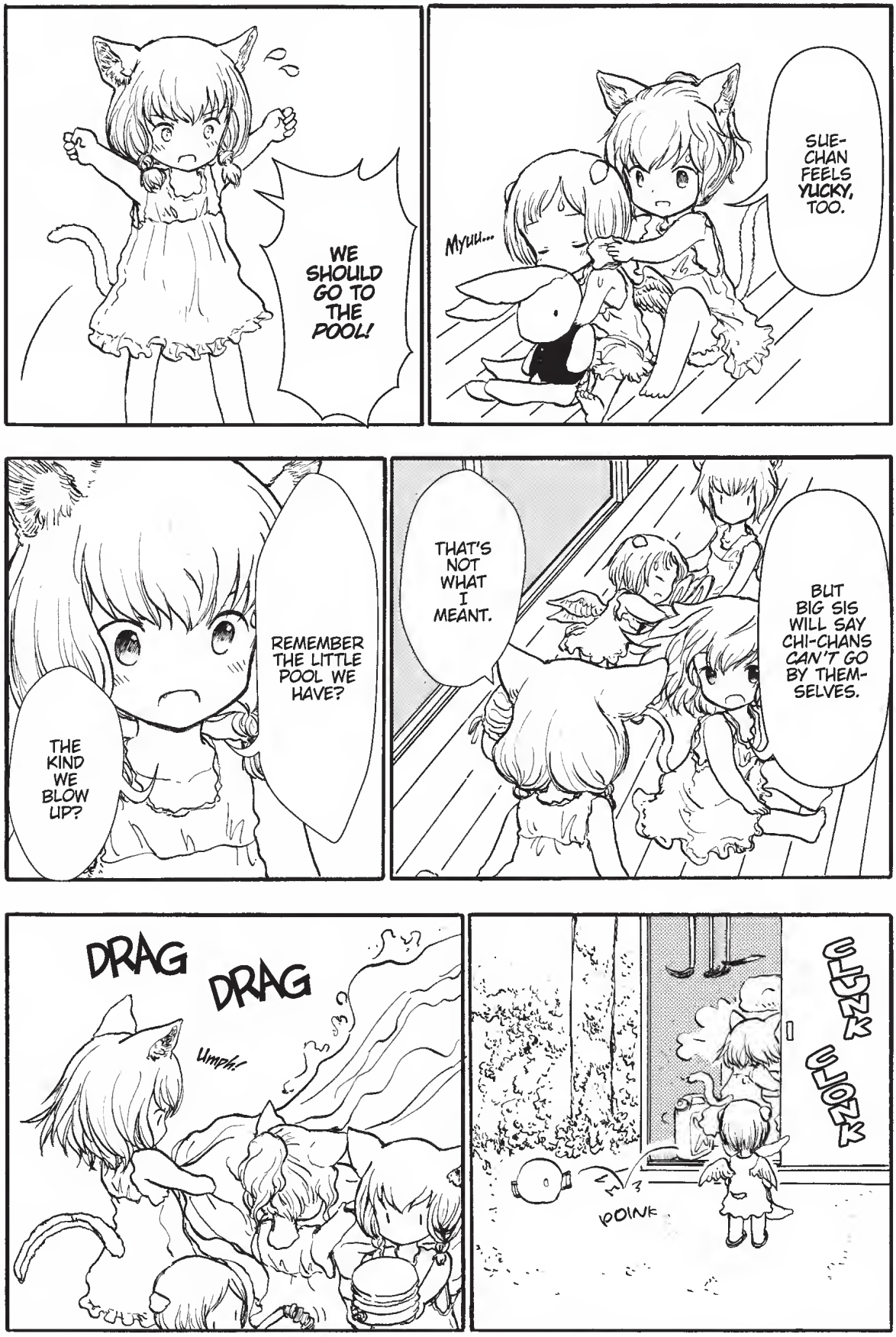
DESPITE THE AGE OF THEIR CIVILIZATION, ANTARCTICANS RELIED ON HUMANS FOR MODERN TRANSPORTATION LIKE AIRPLANES AND MARINE VESSELS, AND DRESSED IN SHABBY ROBES AND FUR COATS (OUTDATED ARMOR AND TRIDENTS FOR THE WARRIOR SUBSPECIES) WHEN THEY BEGAN TO ACTIVELY CONTACT OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY. THAT THEY DID NOT VENTURE INTO OTHER AREAS ASIDE FROM SOUTH AMERICA SUGGESTS THAT THEIR CIVILIZATION DEVELOPED VERY SLOWLY, THOUGH THIS IS NOT UNEXPECTED GIVEN THEIR LIMITED RESOURCES AND POPULATION, NOT TO MENTION THE EXTREME ENVIRONMENT OF THEIR CONTINENT. EVEN HUMANS IN MORE AGREEABLE CLIMATES REMAINED IN THE STONE AGE FOR SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS, AND THE PRIMITIVE STAGES OF REASONING AND OBSERVATION YIELDED CASES OF EXTRAORDINARY DEVELOPMENT IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SUCH AS MATHEMATICS AND ASTRONOMY) IN THOSE ANCIENT HUMAN CIVILIZATIONS.

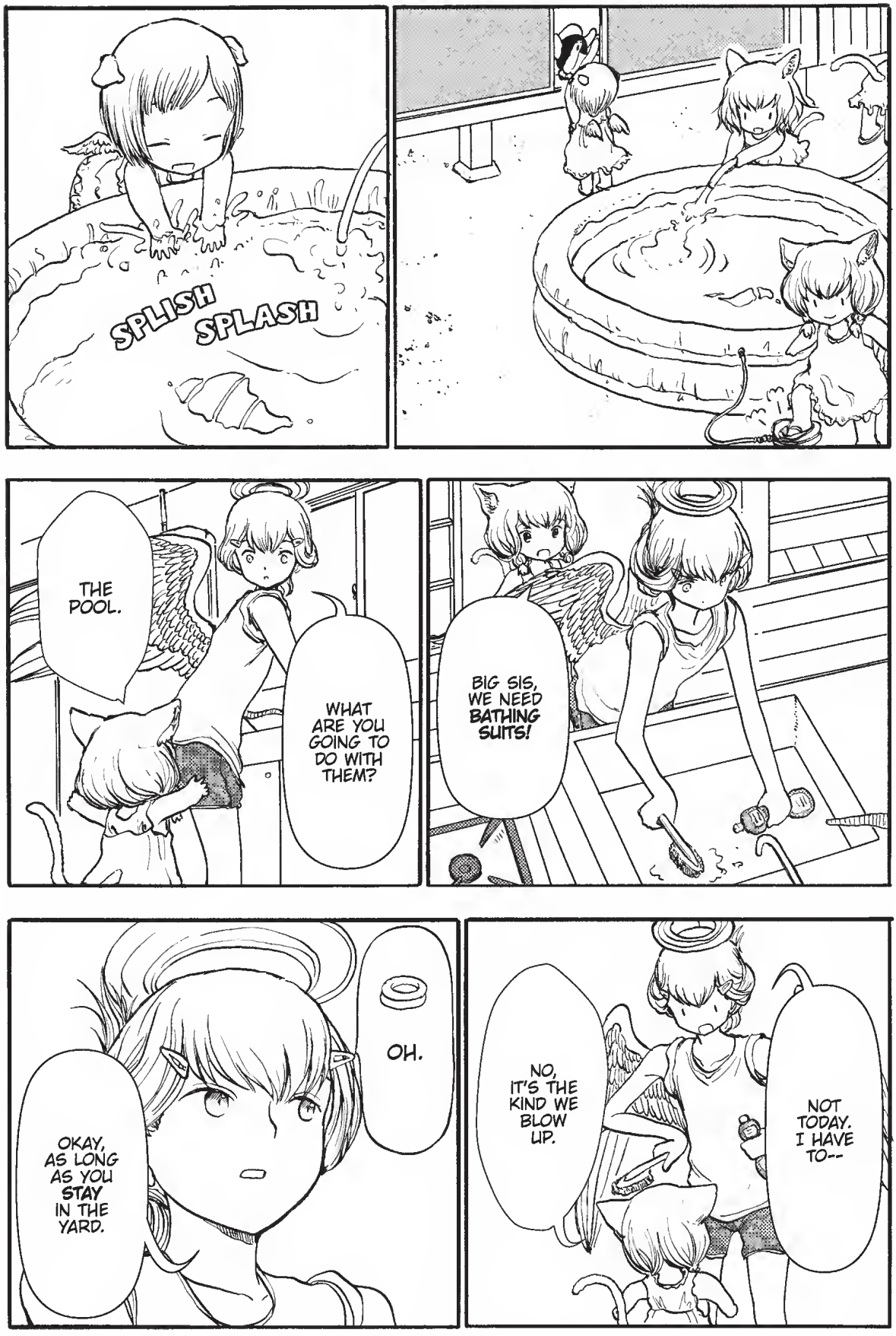
THERE IS A CONVINCING THEORY THAT ANTARCTICANS KEPT HUMANS AWAY FROM THEIR CONTINENT TO HIDE THEIR INFERIOR MILITARY TECHNOLOGY, BUT THE FACT THAT TWENTIETH CENTURY WARSHIPS AND RESEARCH VESSELS WERE UNABLE TO REACH ANTARCTICA SUGGESTS THAT THEY MAY POSSESS ADVANCED DEFENSIVE COUNTERMEASURES. FAR FROM BEING PRIMITIVE, ANTARCTICANS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE SURPASSED HUMANS IN BIOLOGY, CIVIL ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS, MEDICINE, AND PHARMACOLOGY AT THE LEAST. WE STILL KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THEIR CIVILIZATION AND LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT. FOR NOW, WE ADVISE TREATING THEM WITH CAUTION AND ADOPTING A STRATEGY OF DIPLOMACY AND APPEASEMENT.

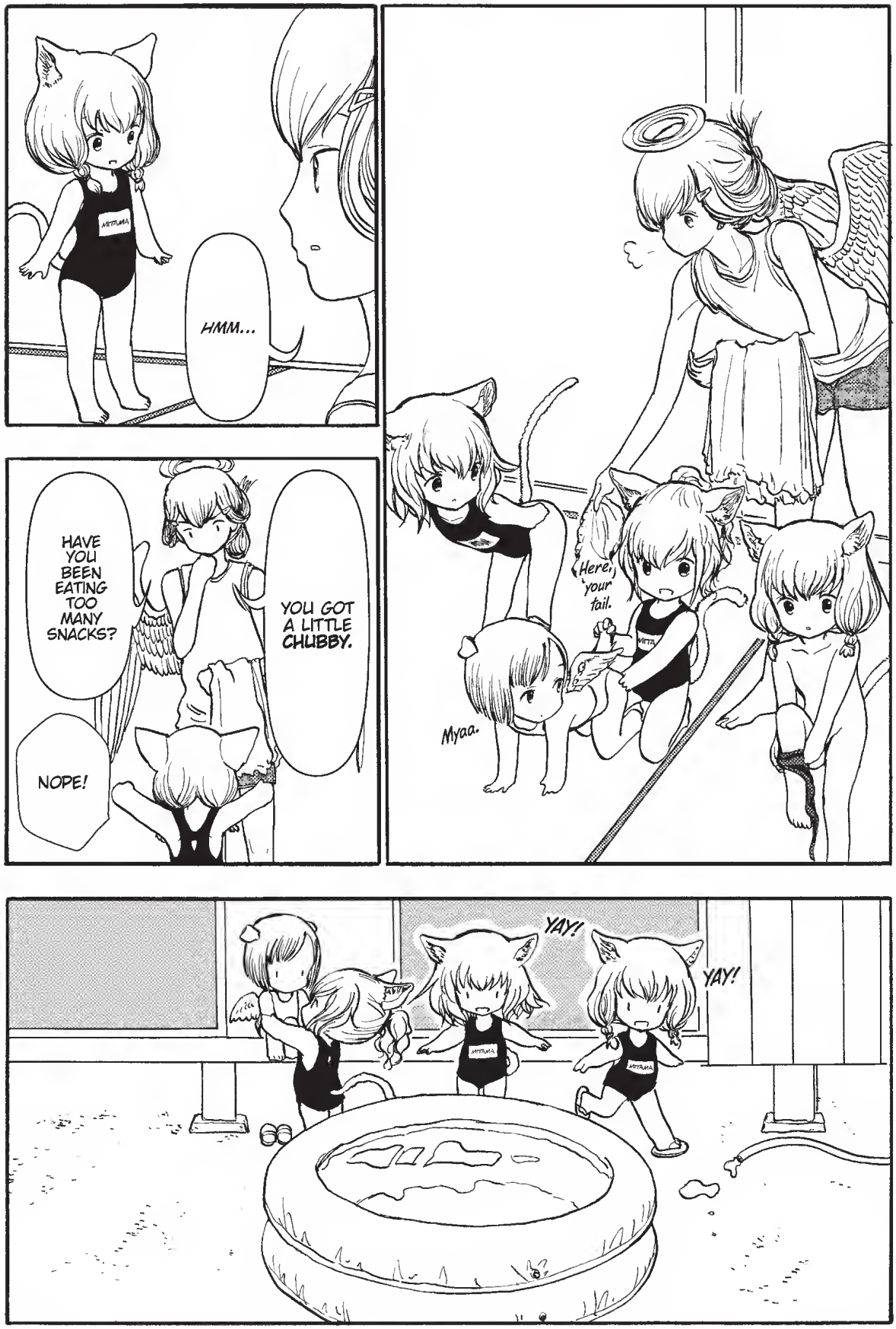


Antarcticans seem to have limited experience with the creative arts. While they show an appreciation for music, they find literature and fine art difficult to understand, especially non-traditional forms such as avant-garde and modern art. Nevertheless, they are passionate about art appreciation and never show signs of boredom. This may be refreshing to those in the fine art world who scorn 'commoners' for lacking interest.

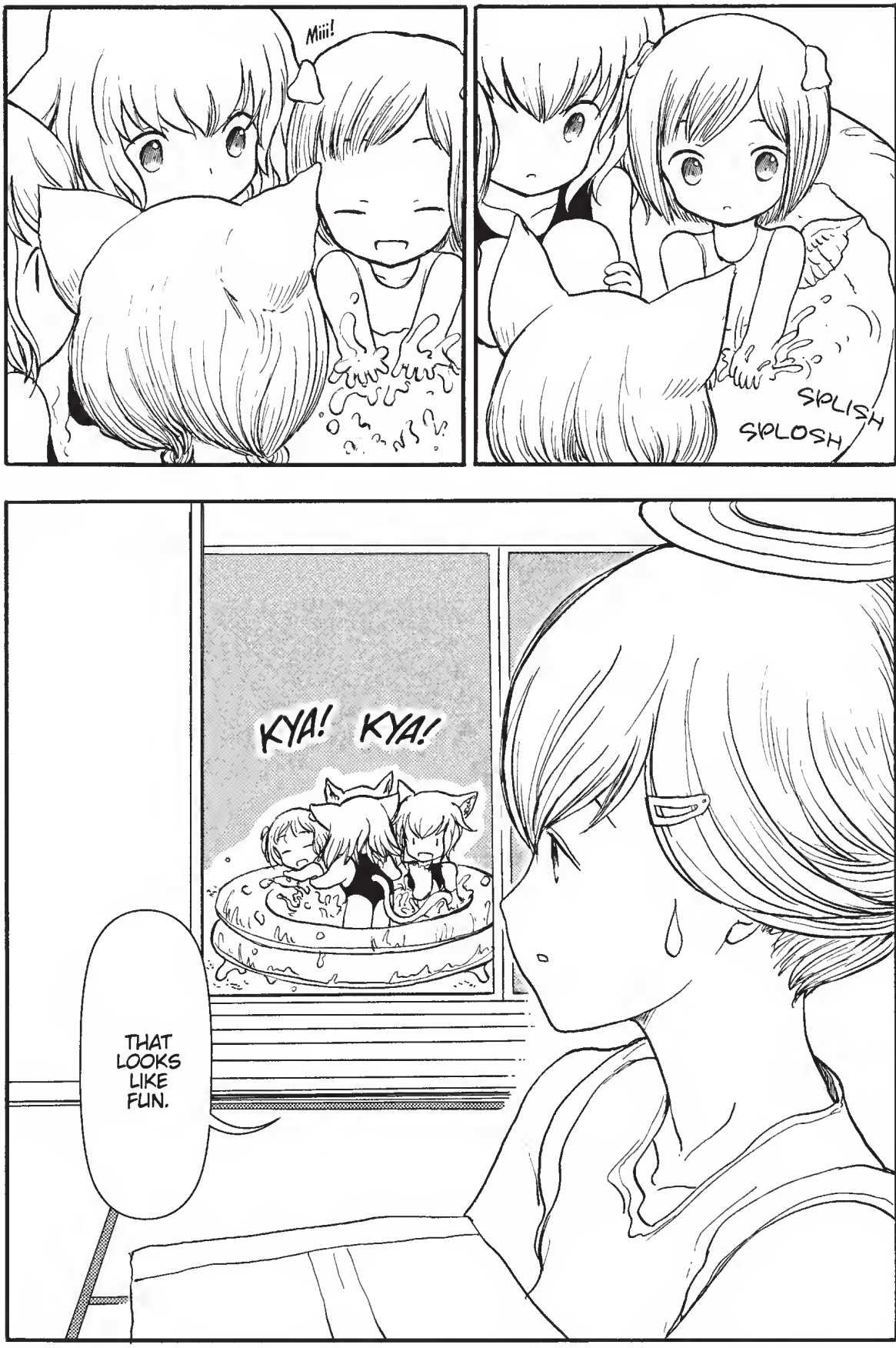

CHAPTER 77
RUB RUB
Sue-chan has the cutest forehead in the whole world!
Ahh~!
IT'S SO HOT!

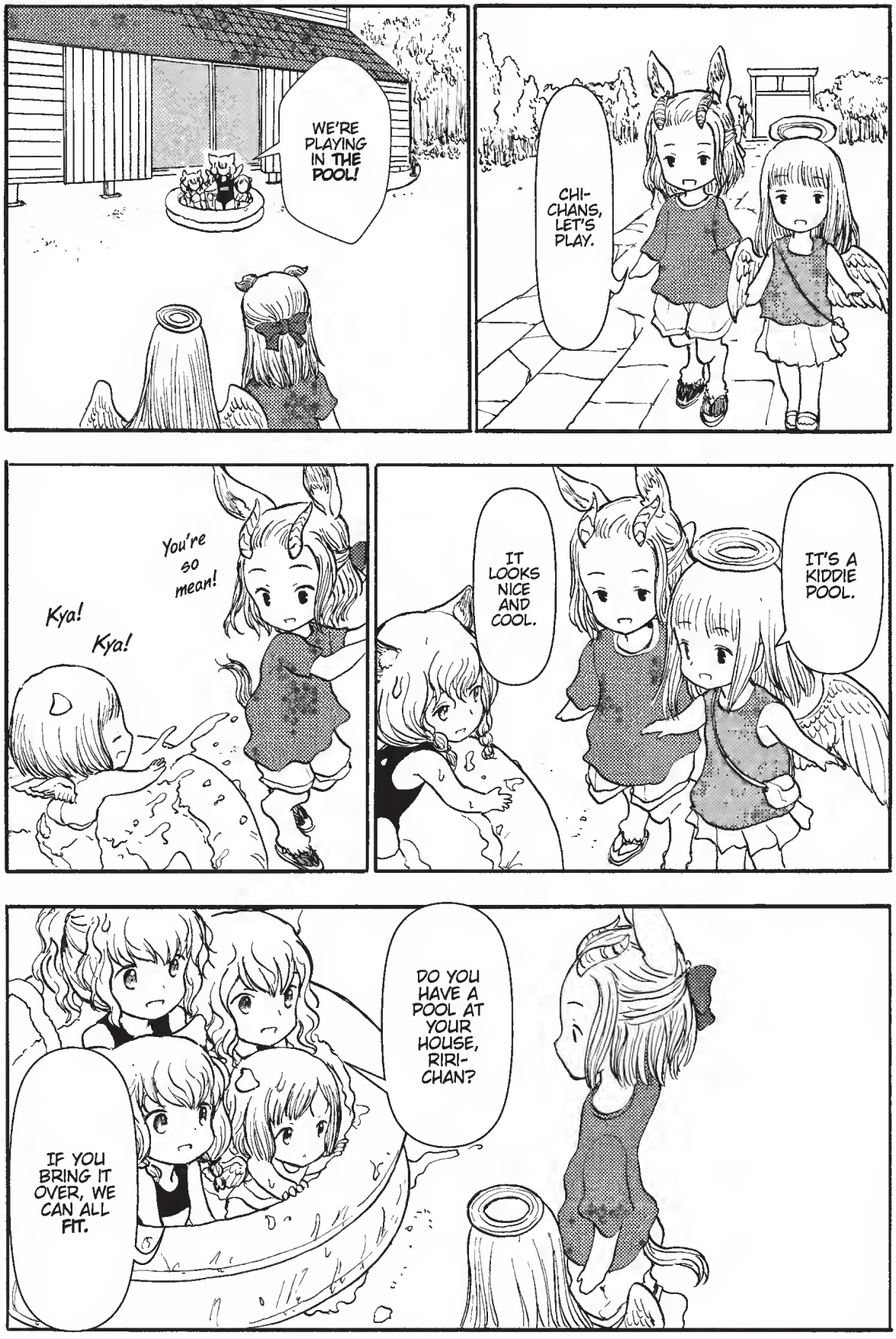

WE SHOULD GO TO THE POOL!
Myuu...
SUE-CHAN FEELS YUCKY, TOO.
REMEMBER THE LITTLE POOL WE HAVE?
THE KIND WE BLOW UP?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
BUT BIG SIS WILL SAY CHI-CHANS CAN'T GO BY THEM-SELVES.
DRAG
DRAG
Umph!
CLINK
CLINK
POINK

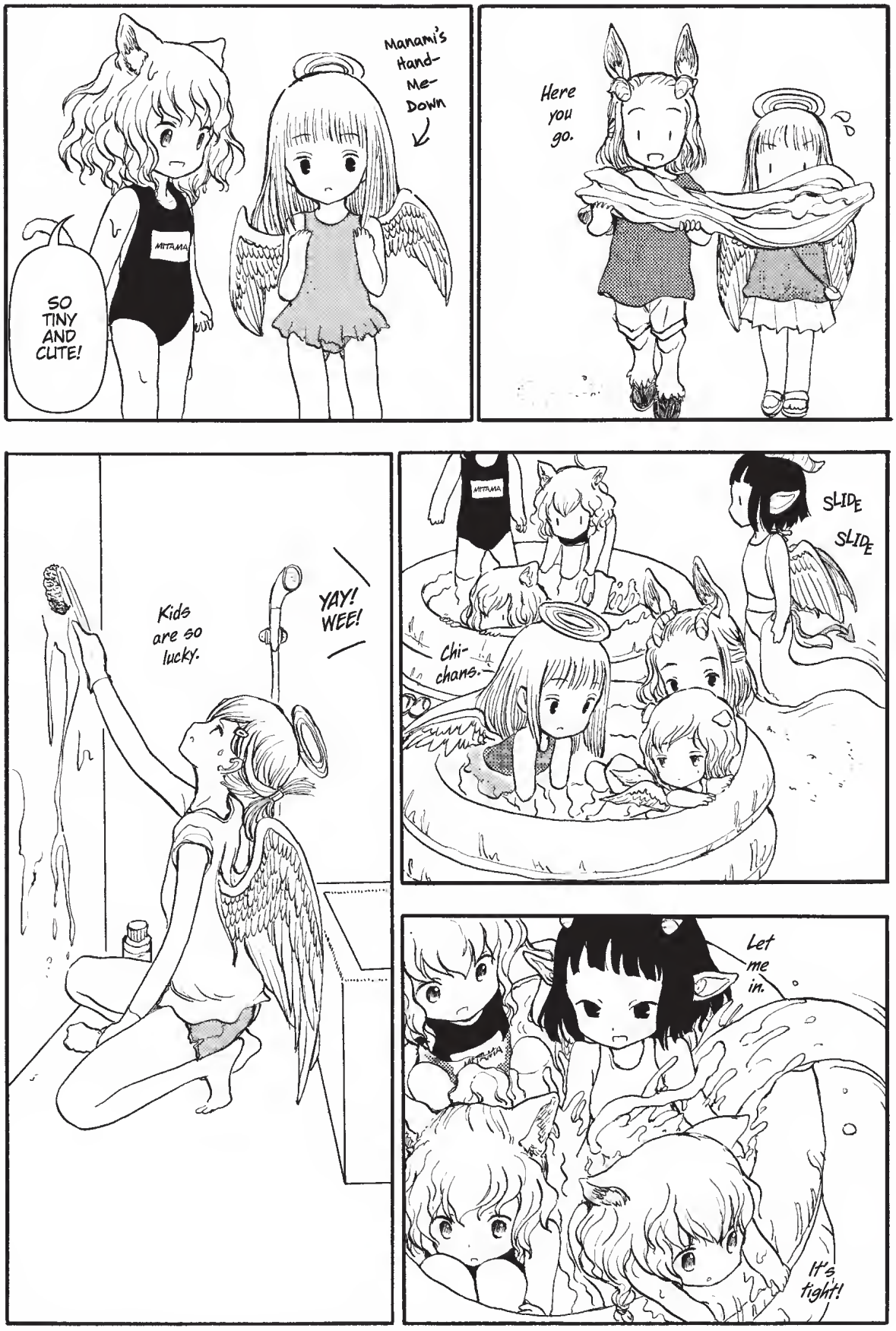

SPLISH
SPLASH
BIG SIS, WE NEED BATHING SUITS!
THE POOL.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM?
NO, IT'S THE KIND WE BLOW UP.
NOT TODAY. I HAVE TO--
OH.
OKAY, AS LONG AS YOU STAY IN THE YARD.


HMM...
Here, your tail.
Myaa.
HAVE YOU BEEN EATING TOO MANY SNACKS?
YOU GOT A LITTLE CHUBBY.
NOPE!
YAY!
YAY!

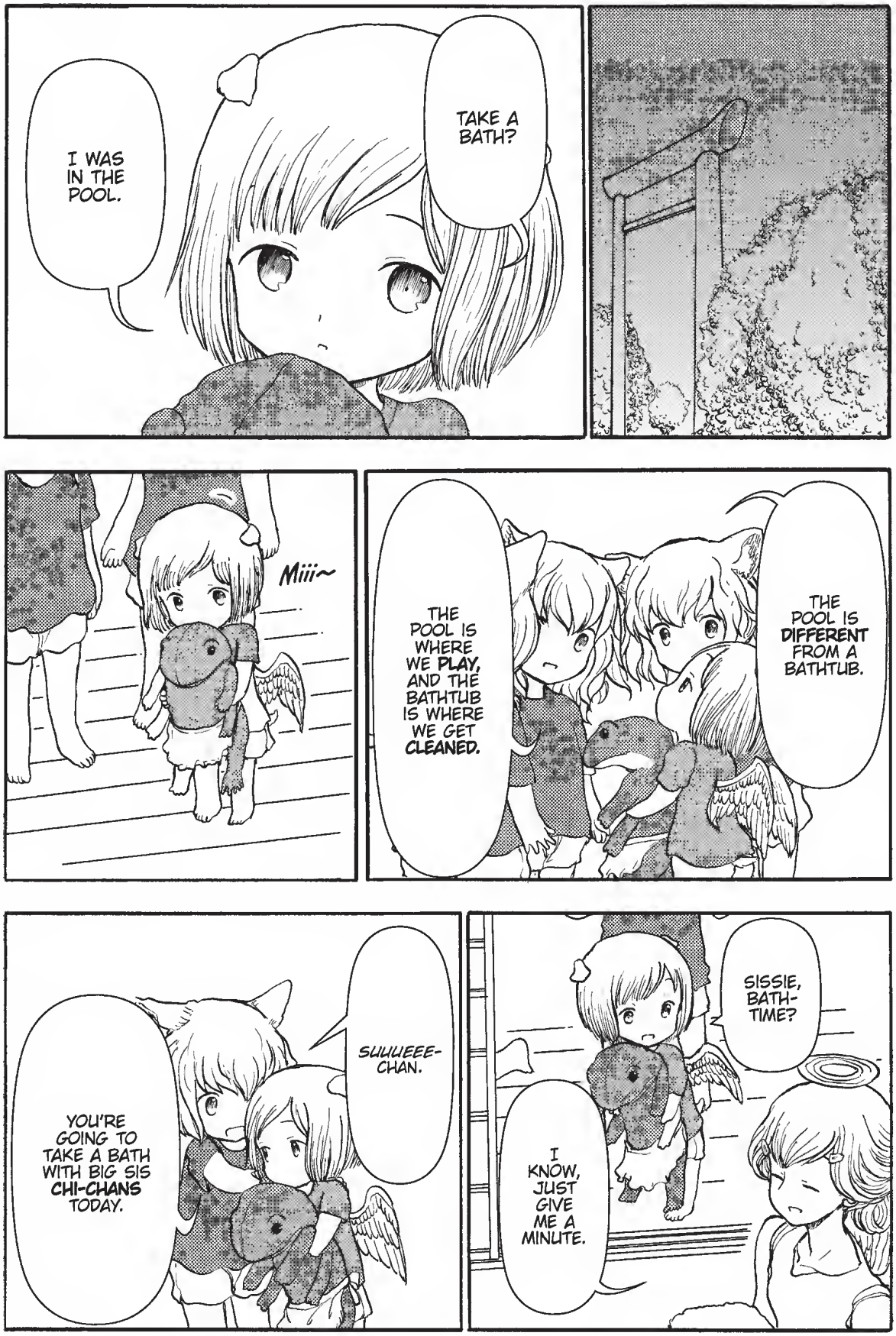
SPLAAASH
NO, YOU GOT BIGGER.
THE POOL SHRUNK.
THIS IS KIND OF TIGHT.
THAT WAS THE BIGGEST ONE IN THE STORE.
BUY US A BIGGER ONE!


Miii!
SPLISH
SPLOSH
KYA! KYA!
THAT LOOKS LIKE FUN.

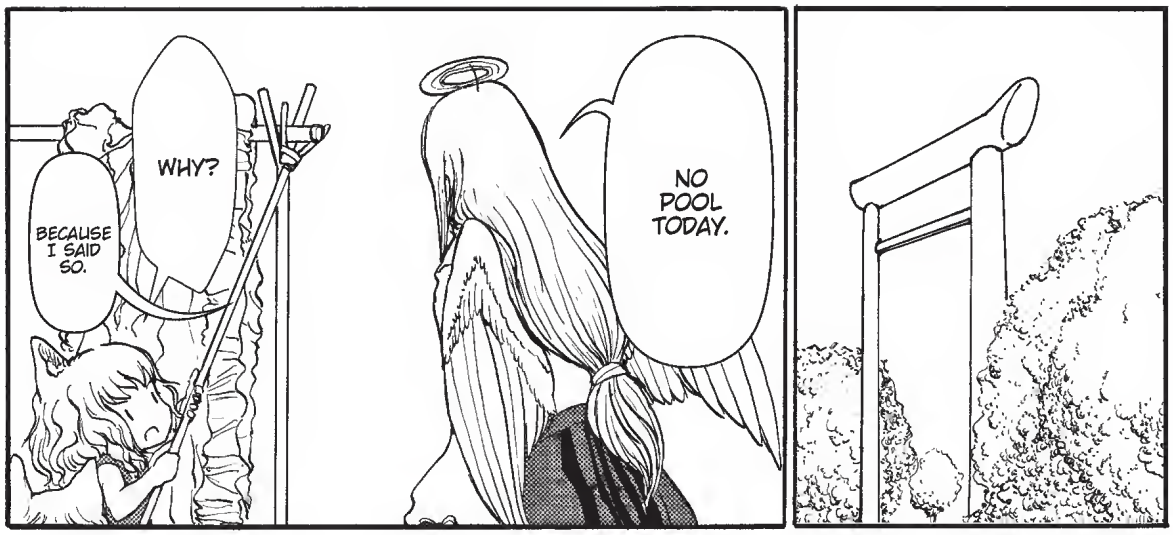

WE'RE PLAYING IN THE POOL!
CHI-CHANS, LET'S PLAY.
You're so mean!
Kya!
Kya!
IT LOOKS NICE AND COOL.
IT'S A KIDDIE POOL.
DO YOU HAVE A POOL AT YOUR HOUSE, RIRI-CHAN?
IF YOU BRING IT OVER, WE CAN ALL FIT.

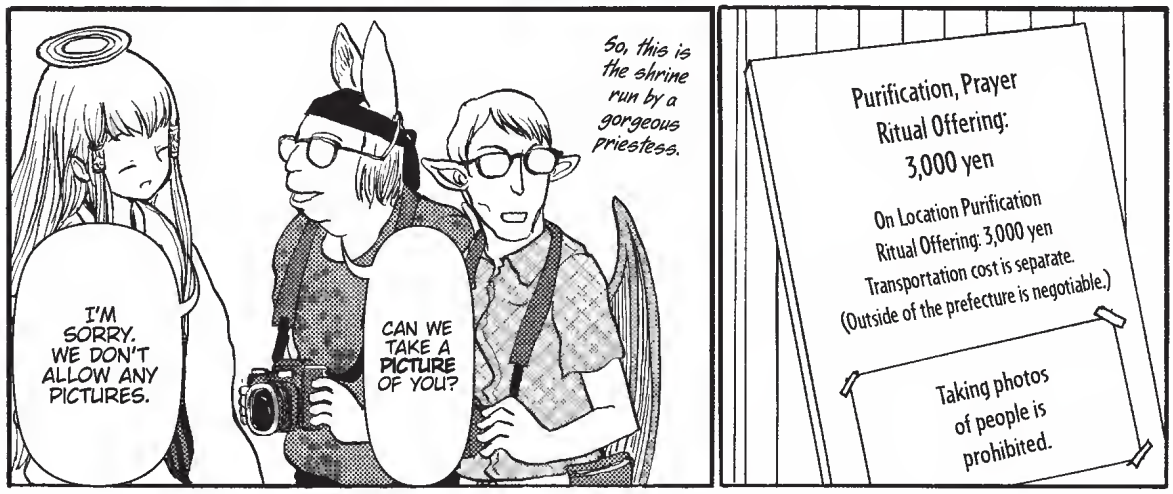

Manami's Hand-Me-Down
MITAMA
SO TINY AND CUTE!
Here you go.
Kids are so lucky.
YAY! WEE!
MITAMA
SLIDE
SLIDE
Chi-chans.
Let me in.
MITAMA
It's tight!

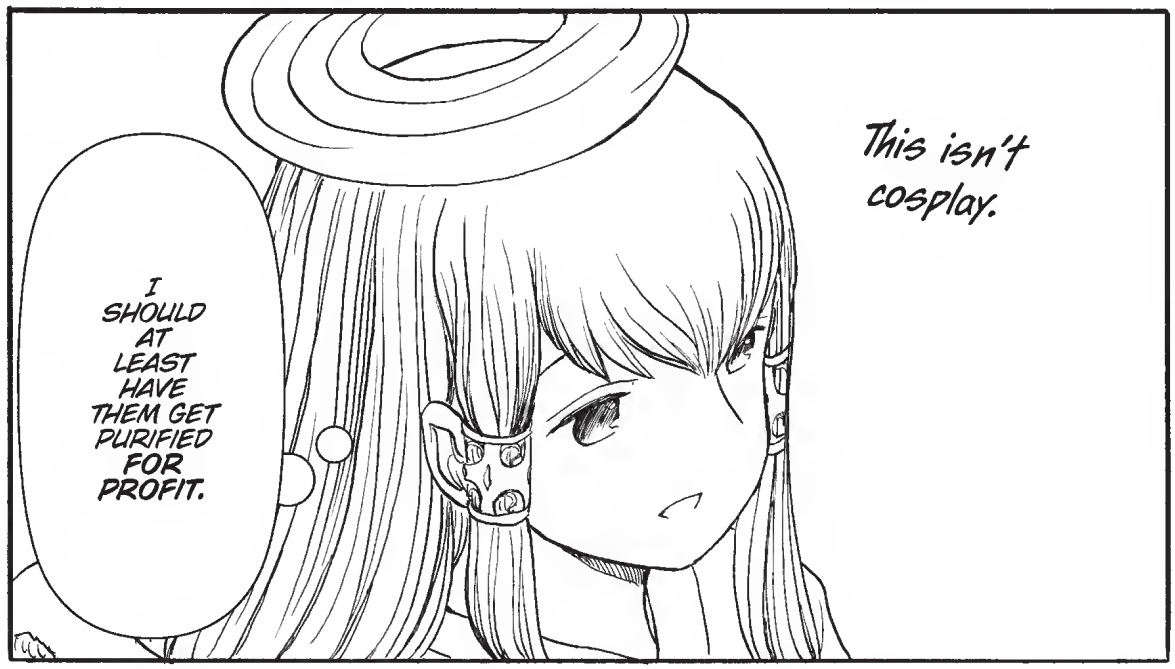
So tiny and cute!
MITAMA


TAKE A BATH?
I WAS IN THE POOL.
Miii~
THE POOL IS DIFFERENT FROM A BATHTUB.
THE POOL IS WHERE WE PLAY, AND THE BATHTUB IS WHERE WE GET CLEANED.
SISSIE, BATH-TIME?
I KNOW, JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE.
SUUUEEE-CHAN.
YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE A BATH WITH BIG SIS CHI-CHANS TODAY.

Let's get your clothes off.
Hands up.
WE'LL BE OKAY. LEAVE HER TO US!
THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT?
You got them?
Is that the deal?
OKAY, CHIGUSA WILL TAKE A BATH WITH YOU.
IT'S ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO HAVE FUN!
ISN'T BATH FOR CLEANING?
Tsunami!
WAHH!


WHY?
BECAUSE I SAID SO.
NO POOL TODAY.


So, this is the shrine run by a gorgeous priestess.
I'M SORRY. WE DON'T ALLOW ANY PICTURES.
CAN WE TAKE A PICTURE OF YOU?
Purification, Prayer
Ritual Offering:
3,000 yen
On Location Purification
Ritual Offering: 3,000 yen
Transportation cost is separate.
(Outside of the prefecture is negotiable.)
Taking photos of people is prohibited.


I SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE THEM GET PURIFIED FOR PROFIT.
This isn't cosplay.

A CentaUr's Life

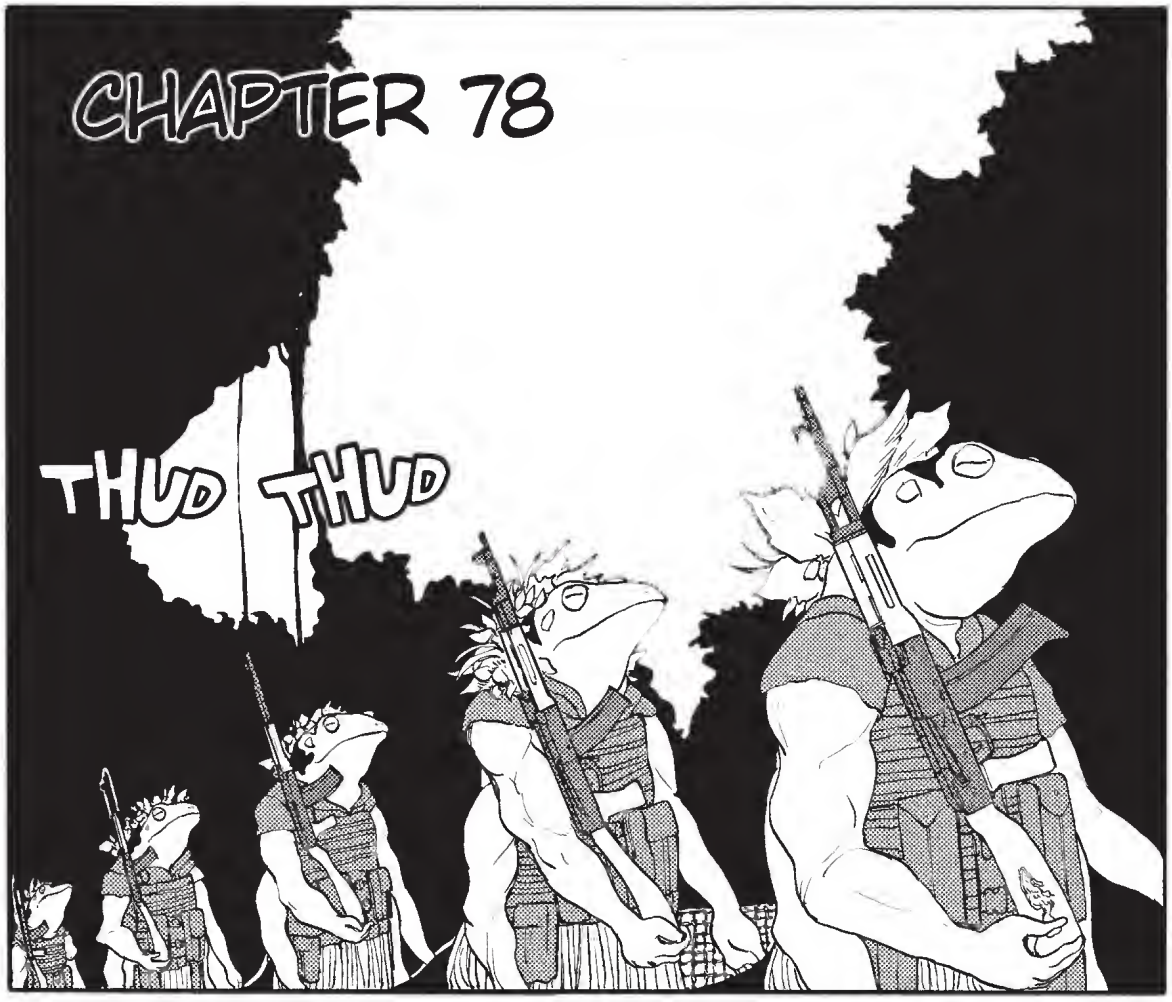
UNDERSTANDING ANTARCTICANS: PART 9

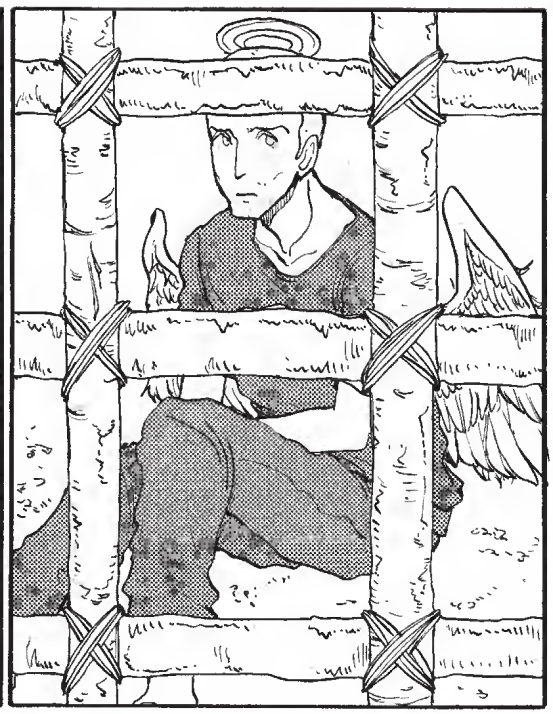
RECENTLY, THE RUINS OF A LOST CITY WERE FOUND IN THE ARABIAN DESERT. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING IN AND OF ITSELF; SINCE ARABIA LIES ON A SINGLE CONTINENTAL PLATE (THE ARABIAN PLATE) THE GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS ARE QUITE STABLE, AS EVIDENCED BY THE LARGE NUMBER OF ANCIENT, ORGANIC-RICH DEPOSITS THAT BECAME GIANT OIL FIELDS. THIS STABILITY ALSO MEANS THAT ARABIA OFTEN YIELDS WELL-PRESERVED PRIMEVAL RUINS. STILL, NO ONE IMAGINED THAT THE RUINS FOUND DEEP UNDERGROUND WOULD BE 40 MILLION YEARS OLD, OR THAT WHAT THEY WOULD FIND WITHIN WOULD BE QUITE SO ASTONISHING.

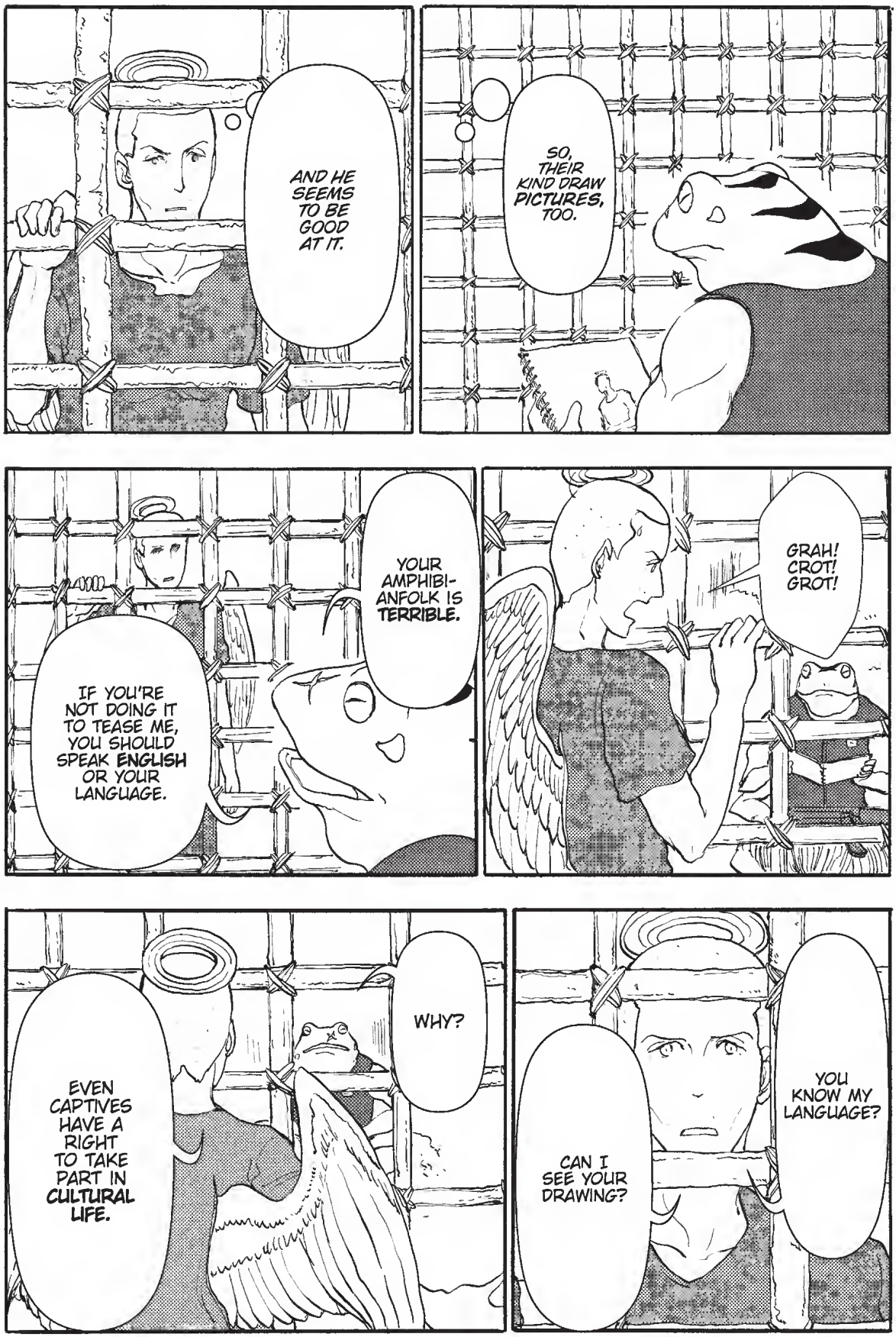
THE RUINS WERE A NETWORK OF VERY NARROW PASSAGEWAYS, DECORATED WITH ARTIFACTS THROUGHOUT. ARTWORK THAT ARCHAEOLOGISTS BELIEVED TO BE A DEPICTION OF THE CREATURE BURIED WITHIN THE RUIN SHOWED A REPTILE CRAWLING ON SIX LEGS. THIS IMPLIES A POSSIBLE RELATION TO ANTARCTICANS, BUT THEY SEEM FAR LESS INTERESTED IN STUDYING THEIR ANCESTORS THAN HUMANS ARE. THEIR LACK OF PARTICIPATION LEFT MUCH TO BE INTERPRETED BY OTHERS. IF THESE RUINS WERE TRULY BUILT BY THEIR ANCESTORS, IT WOULD SHATTER THE THEORY THAT A BIPEDAL RACE PLAYED A ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTARCTICAN CIVILIZATION AND TOOL USE; THIS ALSO INDICATES THAT THEY MAY HAVE RANGED BEYOND ANTARCTICA DURING THE TIME OF SUPERCONTINENTS, OR PERHAPS LATER.

THE ACCURACY OF THE THEORIES BEHIND THE AGE AND REPTILIAN ANCESTRY OF THE RUINS STILL REMAINS QUESTIONABLE, THOUGH, AND A SIGNIFICANT ERROR IN THE AGE COULD MAKE A DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE. A RELIGIOUS TEXT THAT MENTIONS THE EXISTENCE OF A TRIBE THAT BELIEVED IN A LIZARD TOTEM DURING THE PERIOD OF IGNORANCE COULD SUGGEST THAT THE RUINS WERE WHAT WAS CONSIDERED A SMALL TEMPLE DEDICATED TO A SACRED LIZARD, THOUGH THE RUINS ARE ACTUALLY QUITE LARGE. SUCH SPECULATION IS SUPPORTED BY AN UNUSUAL LACK OF EVIDENCE IN THE ORGANIC MATTER. THERE WERE NO TRACES OF LIFE FOUND, POSSIBLY BECAUSE THE CREATURES HAD BEEN PURIFIED AND BURIED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. THE SPIRITUAL PURPOSE IS STILL UNKNOWN, AND THERE ARE OTHER PARTS OF THE RUINS YET TO BE DISCOVERED. THE EXCAVATION IS STILL UNDERWAY.

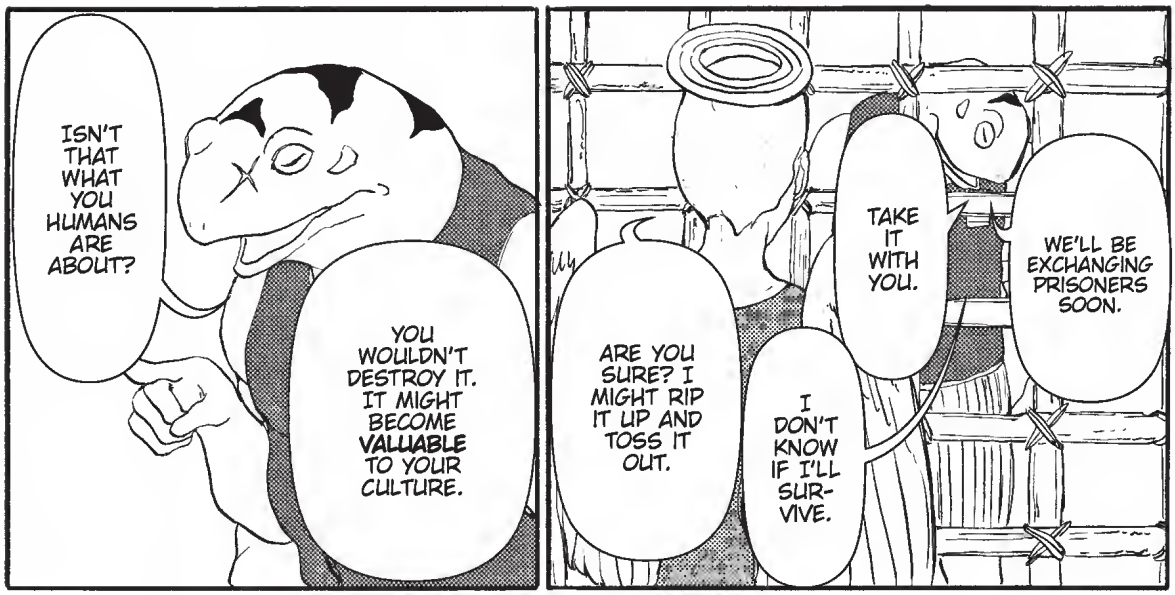
This is an artifact recovered from an Antarctican ruin. It is believed that it depicts a snakefolk tribesman executing a captured monkeyfolk tribesman. It may seem a bit graphic, but it's actually rather typical; the ruins of other civilization have yielded similar artifacts depicting macabre victory celebrations as well. Historians have surmised that they indicate a belief that victory in foreign war is the legacy they leave for their descendants. In that respect, this ruin is not that unusual.

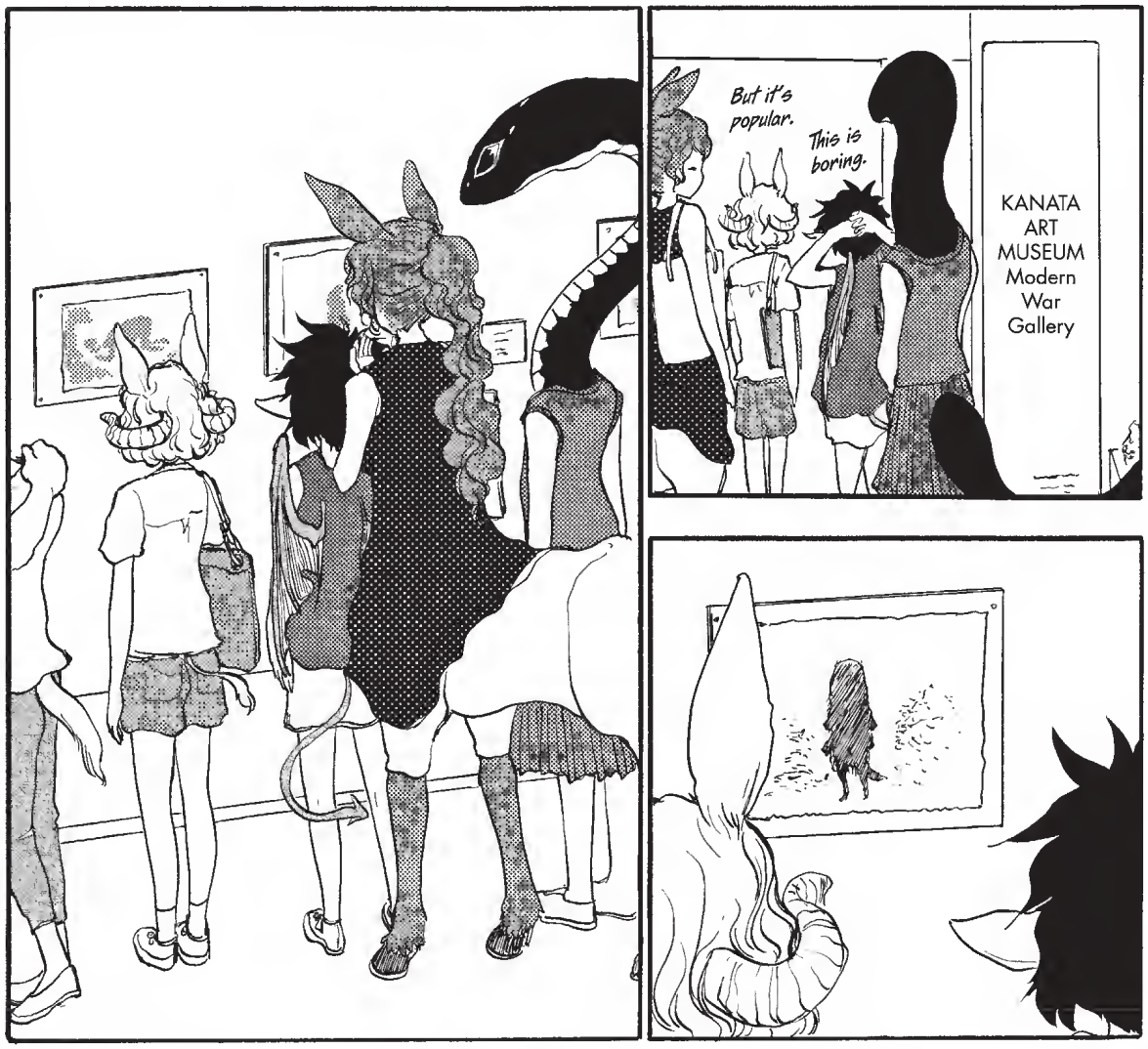

CHAPTER 78
THUD THUD




AND HE SEEMS TO BE GOOD AT IT.
SO, THEIR KIND DRAW PICTURES, TOO.
YOUR AMPHIBI-ANFOLK IS TERRIBLE.
IF YOU'RE NOT DOING IT TO TEASE ME, YOU SHOULD SPEAK ENGLISH OR YOUR LANGUAGE.
GRAH! CROT! GROT!
WHY?
EVEN CAPTIVES HAVE A RIGHT TO TAKE PART IN CULTURAL LIFE.
YOU KNOW MY LANGUAGE?
CAN I SEE YOUR DRAWING?

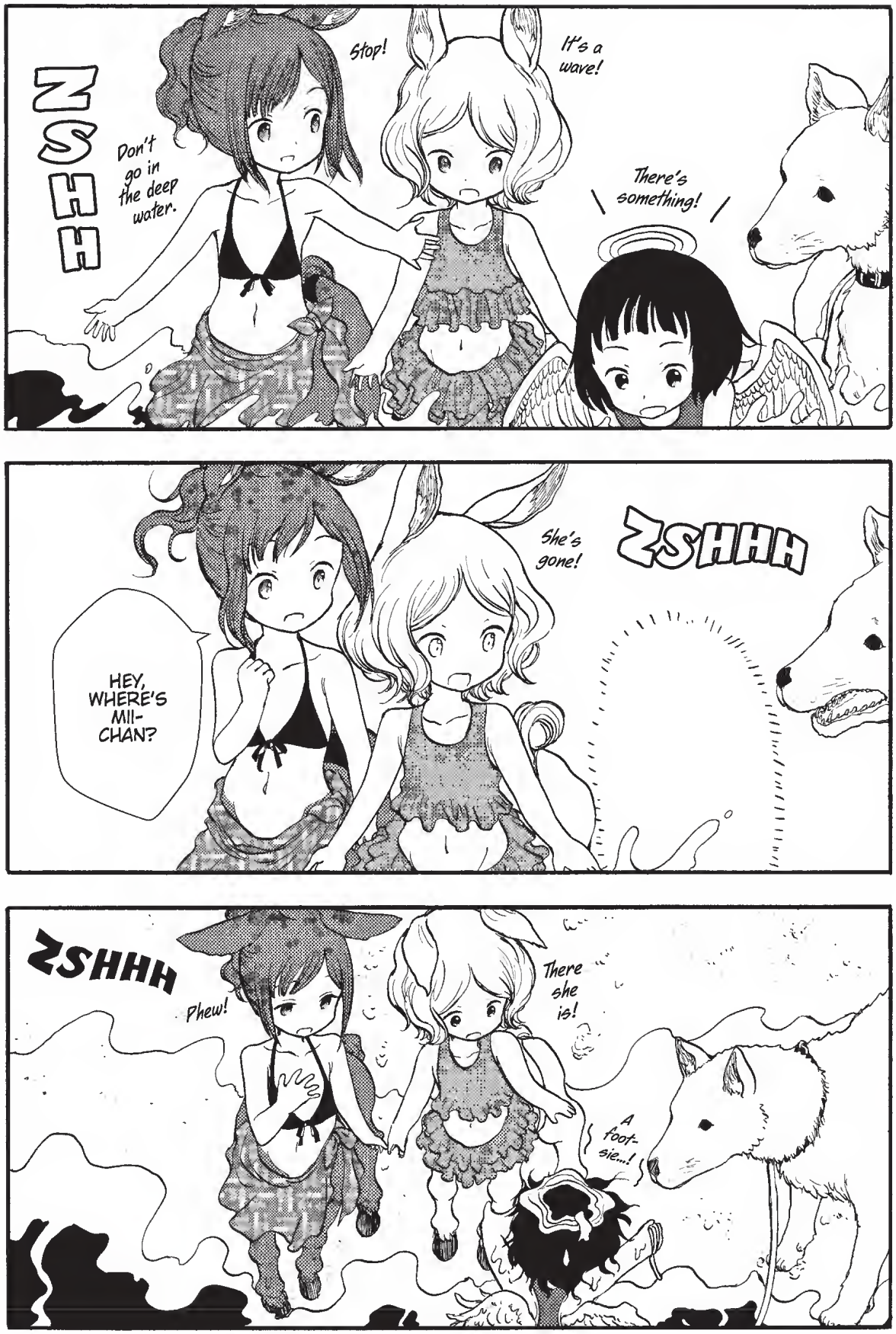
HERE YOU GO.
IT'S NOT VERY GOOD, THOUGH.
GRA HA HA HA!
I ACTUALLY WANTED TO TAKE ART LESSONS. I EVEN LEARNED THE LANGUAGE FOR IT, TOO.
BUT I'M A FROG MAN, YOU KNOW? THAT'S ALL THEY SEE.
NO... IT IS GOOD. HAVE YOU EVER STUDIED ART?
NO.
WHAT IF I REFUSE TO GIVE THIS BACK?
IS THIS DRAWING IMPORTANT TO YOU?
OF COURSE.
IF THIS WAR CAN BRING US EQUALITY...
...THAT'S WORTH DYING FOR.

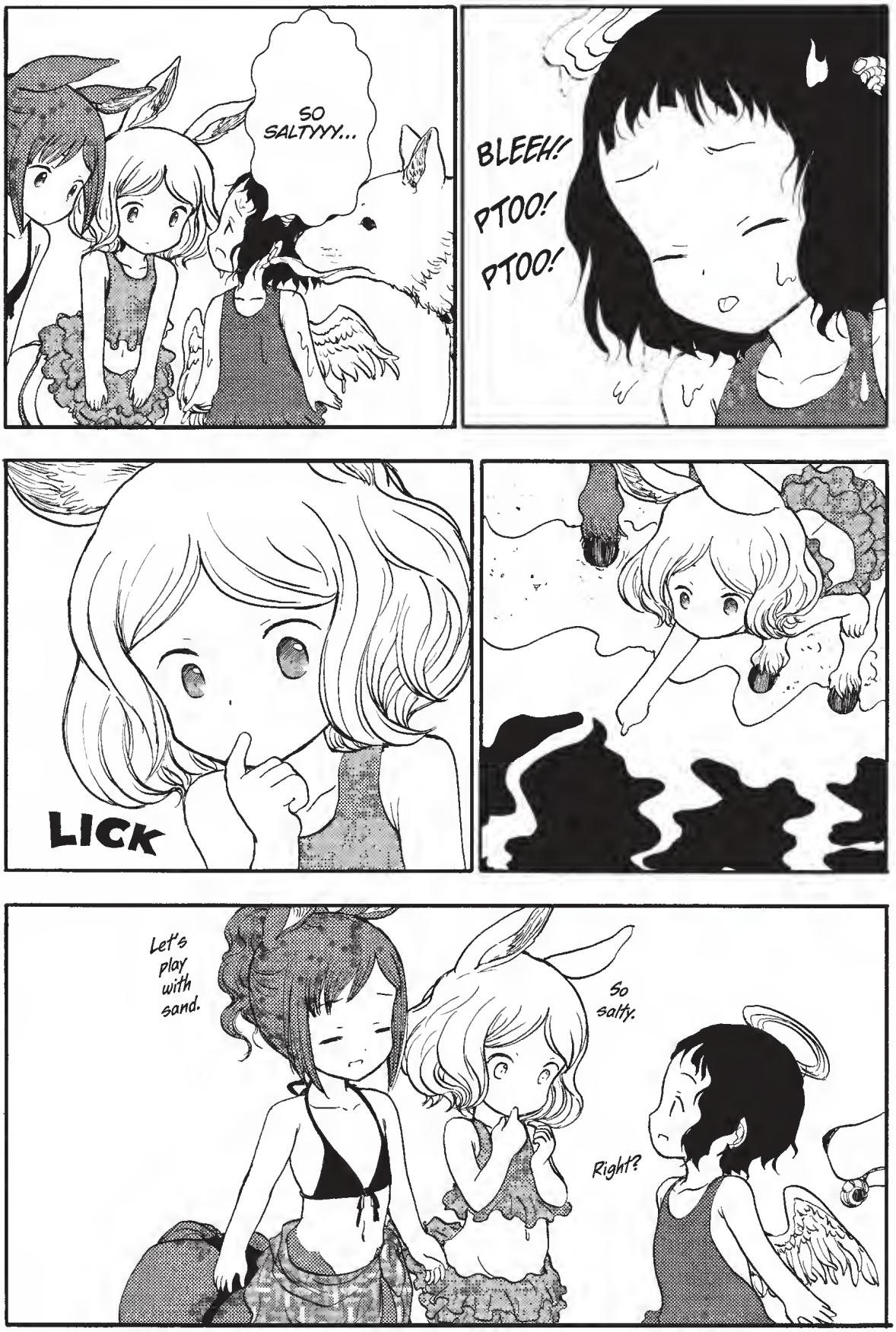

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU HUMANS ARE ABOUT?
YOU WOULDN'T DESTROY IT. IT MIGHT BECOME VALUABLE TO YOUR CULTURE.
ARE YOU SURE? I MIGHT RIP IT UP AND TOSS IT OUT.
I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL SURVIVE.
TAKE IT WITH YOU.
WE'LL BE EXCHANGING PRISONERS SOON.


But it's popular.
This is boring.
KANATA ART MUSEUM Modern War Gallery

A CentaUr's Life

Shino, keep an eye on them.
Don't go too far.
Youngest Mother of the Group
It's the beach!
The beach!
WOO!


ZSHH
Don't go in the deep water.
Stop!
It's a wave!
There's something!
She's gone!
ZSHHH
HEY, WHERE'S MII-CHAN?
ZSHHH
Phew!
There she is!
A foot-sie...!


SO SALTYYY...
BLEEH!
PTOO!
PTOO!
LICK
Let's play with sand.
So salty.
Right?

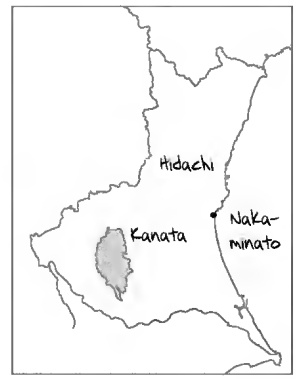
HEY, ARE YOU ALONE?
We'll make a sand castle!
SRTCH SRTCH
KONK
No thanks.
HOW DARE YOU CALL ME AN OLDER LADY!
Oh, she's just an older lady.
NO, I'M WITH THE KIDS OVER THERE.
It looks like one of those theme parks.
ARE THEY GOING TO BECOME GENERAL CONTRAC-TORS?
UH, I GUESS SO.
LOOK AT THAT. DON'T YOU THINK OUR GIRLS ARE ARTISTIC?

THE PLIGHT OF THE PEASANTS

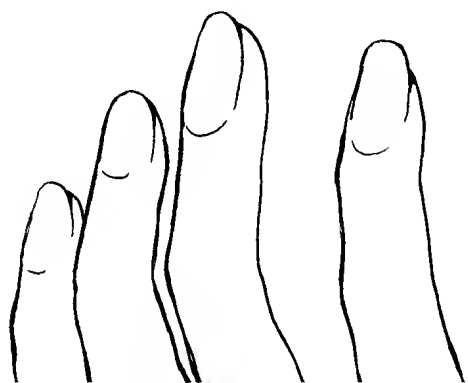
Industry prospers in times of peace, and the Edo Era was no different; but the lot of the peasant was still a difficult one, especially in Kanata.

According to historical records, Hidachi was an abundant region specializing in silk production. Accounts from this period indicate that the plains here were reputed to be so vast that the roads across it seemed endless. Geologically speaking, the plain's dark, rich topsoil is only a thin layer covering poor red soil beneath, but the lack of evidence of frequent landslides, volcanic eruption, and river flooding imply that it was still ideal for stable agriculture. Nevertheless, there was little irrigation development in central Hidachi at this time, including the area where Kanata City stands today. Instead, people built paddy fields for rice cultivation at the foot of the hills, and settlements still exist nearby to this day. Centaurs were unable to plow the water-filled rice fields for obvious physical reasons, but evidence points to extensive dryland farming as well, making Hidachi the largest wheat-producing region in Japan until modern times.

Despite these agricultural successes, the regional economy struggled due to problems with trade. The major limiting factor boils down to inadequate access to seaports, of which there were only two in Hidachi at the time. The nearest port to Kanata, Nakaminato, was still quite a distance away and could only be reached overland, making trade less feasible. The other port was even further, but could be accessed by Lake Kasumigaura and the Sanzuse River. In fact, this port was commonly used in earlier times when whole route was under the control of the Oda clan, but these holdings fragmented when the daimyo was killed at the end of the Sengoku period. Stymied by logistical boundaries on one hand and changing political boundaries on the other, Kanata lost connection to major economic zones and was forced to become largely economically self-sufficient.



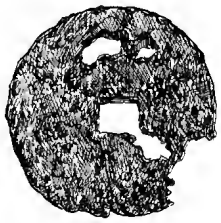
The taxes of the Edo period were yet another burden on the peasants of Kanata. Most taxes were levied annually in rice, with the worth of wheat and other crops being converted to rice as previously discussed, and not converted to cash until arriving in Osaka. This may seem like a step backward at first glance, given that taxes in the previous period were paid directly in cash, but we cannot draw conclusions about this apparent regression without examining the larger picture. In this case, the answer lies in currency—copper coins, to be precise. Copper coins were issued in Japan several times during the even earlier Heian period, but there were merely symbolic. Instead, coins imported from the neighboring country Chuuka were regularly circulated as currency. These imports declined in the Sengoku period, though, resulting in a shortage. Lower-quality coins entered circulation to compensate, but their use dropped dramatically when most daimyo refused to accept them as tax payment, causing them to lose their value. Thus, the shortage of viable currency led to the reinstitution of rice taxes.



LEARN ABOUT OUR TOWN! KANATA CITY'S PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

With taxes once again being levied in rice, the country encouraged rice production and even banned some other cultivation, commercial crops in particular. Even traditional silk production collapsed, as peasants lacked the technology to produce silk thread themselves. Indeed, most silk clothing made in the early Edo period was produced using imported raw silk, and it wasn't until popularity surged in the next era that the industry rebounded. With the decline in raw silk production rendering mulberry orchards unnecessary and other cash crops banned, peasants faced major economic difficulties and could only earn money by selling their meager crop surpluses. Despite this fact, the peasantry was still expected to shoulder a heavy tax burden, pay crop storage fees out-of-pocket, and provide unpaid labor for transportation services called sukegou.

A TYPICAL COPPER COIN



A LOW-QUALITY COIN

Historians argue that it was this sukegou system that later brought the peasants of Kanata to the breaking point. But what was it?

After the Bakufu took power, they built a road system (with Edo as a hub) and set up post stations along the routes. Post stations were staffed with mounted couriers to deliver official items for low or no charge, much like post stations in the earlier Heian period. However, unexpected spikes in volume often exceeded the capacity of the dedicated system, which is where sukegou came into play. Nearby villages were forced to supply men and horses to the post stations, and the burden spread to increasingly distant communities as the volume continued to rise. Villages provided these resources at their own expense, meaning that remote villages gave many more hours of unpaid work than their closer counterparts. During the busy farming season, villages that were already short on manpower simply couldn't spare anyone for sukegou, and they were forced to pay a tax penalty instead.

Villages in Kanata were far from the nearest post station, but were still expected to provide unpaid workers for sukegou. This demand, in addition to a tax burden that they already considered unfair, ultimately pushed the peasants of Kanata too far; when their discontent reached its limit, the Bakyuu Sukegou Riot erupted.

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A Centaur's Life

story and art by **KEI MURAYAMA**

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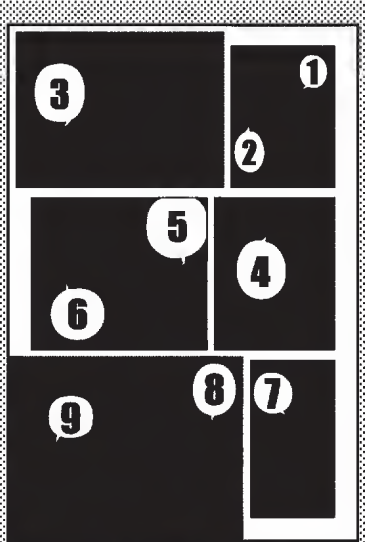
READING DIRECTIONS

This book reads from ***right to left***, Japanese style. If this is your first time reading manga, you start reading from the top right panel on each page and take it from there. If you get lost, just follow the numbered diagram here. It may seem backwards at first, but you'll get the hang of it! Have fun!!



It's the start of a new year at Shin Kanata High School! Himeno and her friends are returning to familiar territory, but for their adorable underlings, it's completely new ground. The president is followed around by a draconid named Karasuba-san and one of the catfolk, Inuki-san, while Ayaka the centaur continues her long-standing admiration of Hime. Both old friends and new unite in the latest installment of *A Centaur's Life!*
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